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REV. JOHN TELFORD, B.A.

WESLEY'S VETERANS

WESLEY'S VETERANS

LIVES OF
EARLY METHODIST PREACHERS
TOLD BY THEMSELVES

VOL. II

PETER JACO
DUNCAN WRIGHT
THOMAS HANBY
ALEXANDER MATHER
JOHN MURLIN
GEORGE SHADFORD
RICHARD WHATCOAT
GEORGE STORY

WITH ADDITIONS AND ANNOTATIONS
BY REV. JOHN TELFORD, B.A.

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Wesley's Veterans

VOL. II

PETER JACO[1]

Letter to the Rev. John Wesley

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

I am sorry that I cannot comply with your desire so effectually as I could wish, having left the papers containing the particulars of God's dealings with me some hundred miles off. At present I can only give you some circumstances as they occur to my memory.

[1] Peter Jaco's autobiography appeared in the first volume of *The Arminian Magazine*, November, 1778, p. 541, with the footnote, 'We have been obliged to place this account at the end of the Number because it came too late for its proper place.' It is the first Life of a Methodist preacher given in the *Magazine*, and Jaco's is also the first preacher's portrait inserted. On p. 433 Wesley inserts a letter he had written to a friend dated June 5, 1778. It was called forth by some criticisms of an anonymous correspondent, who complained, 'Here is not variety enough,' and 'no pictures, or other decorations or embellishments.' Wesley maintained that there was all the variety he had promised, but he evidently took the criticism to heart, with happy results in these Lives and portraits.

I was born of serious parents, at Newlyn, near Penzance, in Cornwall, in the year 1729. When capable of learning I was put to school, where I continued till I was near fourteen; but being of a gay, lively disposition, and my master being given to drink to excess (on which account I soon learned to despise both him and his instructions), did not make that proficiency which I otherwise might have done. As I could not endure the school under such a teacher, my father took me home, and proposed several businesses to me; but I chose rather to be under his care, and to be employed with him in the pilchard-fishery: first, because I knew him to be a perfect master of his business; and, secondly, because I knew he was a truly serious man.

From my infancy I had very serious impressions, and awful thoughts of God which, with the care and precepts of my parents, prevented my running into many excesses incident to youth, though in other respects I was bad enough. I was exceeding proud, passionate, and ambitious, and so fond of pleasure that at any time I would neglect my ordinary meals to pursue it. But amidst all my follies I was still miserable, and often to such a degree that I wished I was anything but a rational creature. After many a restless night I was ready to say, with Job, 'He scareth me with dreams, and terrifieth me with visions.' I frequently resolved to leave my sins; but, alas! my goodness soon vanished away. Thus I repented and sinned; and as I was totally ignorant where my strength lay, I was frequently at the point of giving up all

striving against the torrent and of gratifying every passion as far as my circumstances would permit.

About the year 1746 God sent His messenger into our parts, who proclaimed free and full redemption in the blood of Christ. But though this was the very thing my conscience told me I wanted, yet I would not give up all to come to Him. No: I would dispute for His servants, fight for them (an instance of which you, dear sir, saw the first time you preached on the green between Penzance and Newlyn,[1] when a few lads rescued you from a wicked mob), but I would come no nearer. However, going one Sunday night to hear Stephen Nichols, a plain, honest tinner, the word took strange hold on me, and seemed like fire in my bones. I returned filled with astonishment, retired to my apartment, and, for the first time, began to take a serious review of my past life and present situation with regard to eternity. My eyes were now truly opened. I saw myself a poor, naked, helpless sinner, without any plea but 'God be merciful to me.' My convictions became more and more alarming, till I was driven to the brink of despair. And though my religious acquaintance (for I immediately joined the society) did all they could to encourage me, I would often say, 'I have no hope.' In this deplorable state I continued near four months, when one Sunday (may I never forget it!) as I was attending to the exhortation before the sacrament, when the minister pronounced, 'He

[1] See Wesley's *Journal*, July 12, 1747.

that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh damnation to himself' (a very wrong translation), 'not discerning the Lord's body,' I immediately concluded, 'Then I am lost for ever.' Yet, through the persuasion of my father, I stayed; and I resolved, if I did perish, I would perish in the means of grace. Accordingly in the afternoon I set out by myself for church, a mile distant from the town, for solitude was all my comfort. I had not walked far before it was strongly suggested to my mind, 'Jesus Christ died for the vilest sinner.' I immediately replied, 'Then I am the wretch for whom He died!' In that moment it seemed to me as though a new creation had taken place. I felt no guilt, no distress of any kind. My soul was filled with light and love. I could no more doubt of my acceptance with God through Christ than I could of my own existence. In this state I continued near two years, and am firmly persuaded might have still continued in it but for my own unfaithfulness.

I was now convinced it was my duty to do all I could for God, and accordingly reproved sin wherever I saw it, without regard to the character or station of the person; and, wherever I found a disposition to receive it, added a word of exhortation.

Some years after my friends thought I might be more useful if I was to exhort in the society. With much reluctance I made the attempt; but though God blessed in a very remarkable manner my feeble efforts, I was with difficulty persuaded to continue it.

When you, sir, visited us in 1751 you persuaded me to enlarge my sphere, and appointed me to visit several societies. I accordingly complied, but still with unwillingness. In your next visit to Cornwall you thought I was not so useful as I might be, and proposed my taking a circuit. This I could by no means think of. I looked on myself as an occasional helper, having a good deal of time on my hands; and if a preacher was ill, or unable to keep his circuit, I thought it my indispensable duty to fill his place. But, though I knew I was called to this, I could not see that I should go farther, on account of the smallness of both my gifts and grace.

In the year 1753 you proposed my going to Kingswood School, and accordingly, having settled the terms, I set out for Bristol in April, 1754; but, to my great disappointment, I found the school full, and a letter from you desiring me to come immediately to London. This, together with your brother's telling me that if I returned back to my business he should not wonder if I turned back into the world, determined me to comply with your desire. At the Conference in London, May 4, 1754, I was appointed for the Manchester Circuit, which then took in Cheshire, Lancashire, Derbyshire, Staffordshire, and part of Yorkshire. Here God so blessed my mean labours that I was fully convinced He had called me to preach His gospel. Meantime my hardships were great. I had many difficulties to struggle with. In some places the work was to begin; and in

most places being in its infancy, we had hardly the necessaries of life; so that after preaching three or four times a day, and riding thirty or forty miles, I have often been thankful for a little clean straw, with a canvas sheet, to lie on. Very frequently we had also violent oppositions. At Warrington I was struck so violently with a brick on the breast that the blood gushed out through my mouth, nose, and ears. At Grampound I was pressed for a soldier; kept under a strong guard for several days, without meat or drink but what I was obliged to procure at a large expense; and threatened to have my feet tied under the horse's belly, while I was carried eight miles before the commissioners: and though I was honourably acquitted by them, yet it cost me a pretty large sum of money as well as much trouble.

For many years I was exposed to various other difficulties and dangers. But, having obtained help from God, I continue to this day! And, all thanks to Him, I wish to live and die in His service. At present I find my mind as much devoted to Him as I ever did. I see and feel the necessity of a greater conformity to Christ. May I never be satisfied till I awake up after His likeness!

Thus, dear sir, I have given you a brief account of my life, as far as my memory would assist me. If it is useful to any soul, my purpose is fully answered.

PETER JACO.

LONDON, *October* 4, 1778.

A letter which Mr. Jaco wrote to Mrs. Hall, of London, will show the spirit of the writer :

NEWLYN, NEAR PENZANCE, *Sept.* 11, 1776.

Having a few minutes of freedom from multitudes pressing on every side to ask me how I do, and bid me welcome once more to the place of my nativity, I with pleasure embrace the opportunity of fulfilling my promise to my much-esteemed and valued friend. Perhaps it may not be unentertaining to give a brief account of my journey to this world's end, which is upwards of three hundred miles from London.

On Thursday, August 29, at six o'clock in the morning, Mr. Folgham and your friend set out. We travelled hard all the day, being allowed fifteen minutes for breakfast, and twenty for dinner ; but no tea, nor any supper. We arrived at Salisbury at seven o'clock ; stayed half an hour for Mr. Folgham, who had some business to do ; and then set out for Blandford, in Dorset, twenty-three miles from Salisbury, across the plain and open country, without any enclosures. The night was remarkably fine. The moon was full, and there was not a cloud in the sky to obstruct her light. Not a breath of wind was stirring, nor any living creature near, except large flocks of sheep, penned on each side of the road, whose innocent bleating, reverberating from the adjacent hills, rendered the scene awfully delightful. All the fine sentiments dispersed through the 'Night Thoughts' crowded upon my imagination ; more especially

those in the 'Ninth Night,' where the author has given us a picture at large, which I would recommend to your serious perusal. I was much affected with that instructive passage :

> Night is fair Virtue's immemorial friend ;
> The conscious moon, through every distant age,
> Has held a lamp to wisdom.

But, alas ! like all transitory scenes, this pleasant night gave way to a gloomy, rainy morning, when the bleak winds, coming down from the stupendous mountains, attended by impetuous floods, formed a contrast the most disagreeable.

Nothing memorable happened till Saturday afternoon, when I had the pleasure of seeing our worthy friend Mr. Wesley, who received me with the warmest affection.

At Plymouth Dock I stayed till Tuesday morning, and then set out on horseback for this place—full ninety miles. Through the infinite mercy of God, I arrived safe on Monday evening, to the great joy of an affectionate father.

My apartment here is perhaps the most agreeable that you ever saw. I have two neat chambers, built upon the extreme margin of the shore. A large bay opposite my windows is twenty-one miles long and twelve wide ; so that at this moment I can see nearly twenty sail of ships, and upwards of a hundred large fishing-boats, passing and repassing. Nothing on earth can be more agreeable to me. Yet I must soon part with it. I have no home but

heaven. God grant that I may not fall short of it!

I hope this will find you resolved to be a Christian indeed, determined to take heaven by violence. Nothing short of this will do. Christ cannot approve of any sacrifice but that of the heart, and not even of this without a surrender of the whole. O, give it Him. He is worthy of it. It is His undoubted right. He has paid dearly for the purchase. Let Him have it, in God's name. This is perhaps the most critical period of your whole life.[1] You have need of all your understanding and prudence. Above all you have need of much prayer, that God may direct and keep you in every step you take.

How long I shall stay here I know not. I have done nothing yet, and when I shall do anything I cannot tell. Perhaps I shall do nothing, after all my expense and trouble, except that of getting a few fair promises of amendment from my brothers, which may last while I am on the spot.

Your affectionate and obliged friend,

PETER JACO.

Matthias Joyce, who afterwards became a Methodist preacher, says that when he and a friend waited on Mr. Jaco to request notes of

[1] At this period Mrs. Hall had lately become the youthful and unencumbered widow of a negligent spendthrift. She was possessed of great personal beauty, and of sprightly conversational talent. In her second choice she profited by the advice of her friend.

admission to the society in Dublin, he 'brought us into a private apartment, and lovingly talked over the matter with us; then gave us our notes, saying "The Lord write your names in the Lamb's book of life!"'[1]

Mr. Atmore says that Mr. Jaco was remarkably comely in his person, tall and handsome, and possessed an amiable natural temper. His understanding was strong and clear; and he had acquired much useful knowledge, which rendered him an agreeable companion. His talents for the Christian ministry were very considerable; and he was a scribe well instructed in the things of God. David Bruce, a Scotchman who came to London about the time the new chapel was opened in City Road, had a great prejudice against Wesley's teaching, but was prevailed upon to attend one service at the place 'where erroneous and heretical doctrines were taught.' Peter Jaco preached from 'We have found the Messiah.' His prejudice vanished; he joined Mr. Atlay's class, and received a ticket of membership from Mr. Wesley in 1780.[2] In consequence of bodily indisposition, Mr. Jaco was compelled, for several years before his death, to desist from his itinerant labours. He died in peace at Margate, in Kent, and his remains were interred in the burying-ground connected with the City Road Chapel, London, where a stone, erected to his memory, bears the following inscription (the verse was written by Charles Wesley):

[1] *Early Methodist Preachers*, iv. 240; see other testimonies to his influence, vi. 239, 256.

[2] *Methodist Magazine*, 1827, p. 218.

'In memory of Mr. Peter Jaco, who died July 6, 1781, aged fifty-two years.

Fisher of men, ordained by Christ alone,
Immortal souls he for his Saviour won;
With loving faith, and calmly-potent zeal,
Performed and suffered the Redeemer's will;
Steadfast in all the storms of life remained,
And in the good old ship the haven gained.'

DUNCAN WRIGHT[1]

I WAS born in May, 1736, in the kirktown of Fortingale, near the River Lyon, and not far from the lovely banks of the 'soft-winding Tay,' Breadalbane, Perthshire.

I claim kindred to the Stuarts, M'Donalds, and M'Gregors' families; perhaps far more famed in story for martial exploits than for any extraordinary attainments in religion.

It might have been better for me to have had a hardy, Highland education; but of this I was deprived by the removal of my parents to Edinburgh when I was very young. Here I had the best education my father could give me, who was my only schoolmaster. He was esteemed a pretty good scholar; but I doubt knew little of the life and power of religion. Yet he prayed with us at times, made us learn the Assembly's Shorter Catechism, and took care of us to the best of his knowledge. I lost him early, which was a loss indeed! For my mother, being too easy and indulgent, let us have our own way, which led us to all the follies and sins we were capable of. I do not remember that any creature took any pains to instruct me till I was near twenty years of age, but old

[1] From *The Arminian Magazine*, 1781, p. 367.

Lady D., of Preston Field, who at times advised me as well as she could. And yet the Lord did not leave me without drawings from above: for having a bookish inclination, I read and wept very often till my head ached, and hardly knew what ailed me. Only I wanted to be a Christian, and to be easy and happy, but knew not how. Had any living Christian taken a little pains to inform me, I doubt not but I should have embraced the proffers of mercy long before I did. Indeed, I never felt any spirit of opposition to religion and religious persons. For as I had neither the form nor the power of religion myself, I knew I had little reason to speak an unkind word of those that had any appearance of either.

I was from my infancy feeble and tender; yet, having many relations in the army, no employment would relish with me but a soldier's life: hence my mother never could prevail with me to follow any regular business, and this exposed me to vain and wicked company. Yet having some tenderness of conscience left, repenting and sinning, resolving and breaking through my resolutions, made my life a weariness indeed. So, in order to be happy, I resolved to see the world in a military life. Hence I enlisted, the latter end of 1754, into the tenth regiment of foot. None of my friends knew what was become of me till I wrote to my mother from Limerick in Ireland. My mother, being infirm, did not survive this long: she died the spring following, and I fear my disobedience hastened her departure. An awakened conscience

will smart, first or last, for this sin, among others, stubbornness and disobedience to parents. So did mine; for the day I enlisted I thought, 'Now I have done for soul and body,' for I could form no conception how a soldier could be religious.

In the summer of 1755 we encamped near the city of Cashel, eight regiments of foot and two of horse, where William Coventry, a corporal in the Royal Scotch, frequently preached. I heard him once, but felt nothing but a kind of wonder at his courage in preaching among such a set as we were. I little thought that in less than four years I should be engaged in the same work in another camp.

We returned to Limerick for winter quarters, where I began to consider (as the soldiers had then a great deal of leisure time in the winter) how I should pass my tedious moments. I could play at cards and other games (then common among the soldiery, but now happily suppressed), but I seldom liked my company. For though I could swear sometimes, yet I could not relish so much of it as they were addicted to. I therefore bought and borrowed all the plays, novels, and romances I could lay my hands upon, reading late and early. And my reading had this effect, at least, that it kept me out of worse diversions, and gave my mind a turn above such intemperance and lewdness as were too common in men of my rank.

At last an old soldier, in the same barrack-room with me, found fault with me for spending my time and spoiling my eyes in reading such

trash. I thought, 'I will show you how I can read religious books as well as others.' But I had none of my own. I borrowed two from one of our soldiers. One of them was *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*,[1] which, being written by way of dialogue, attracted my attention; and before I read it half through I was truly though gently convinced that I was a lost sinner, and that Christ was all I wanted to make me easy, satisfied, and happy.

Now it was that a deep sense of my time, youth, and health spent in sin and folly, my ingratitude to God, the best of fathers, my slighting of Christ so long, and grieving the blessed Spirit, melted my heart, and made my eyes a fountain of tears. I awoke as from a dream, and saw all about me, like the men of Sodom, blind and groping about for happiness; or asleep, with storms of wrath ready to burst upon their heads. The immediate consequence was a distaste to all my books and diversions. I exchanged them for religious tracts; and having a praying heart, it soon found a praying place; for as I had no place of retirement in my room, I found a covered battery on the castle-wall. This soon became my closet; and when on guard I used to cover my head with my watch-cloak, and, stopping my ears with my fingers, spent many a happy moment in

[1] 1645; second part added 1648. By E. F.—probably Edward Fisher, gentleman commoner of Brasenose College, Oxford. See Low's *Thomas Boston*, p. 151. It set forth the absolute freeness of the gospel. Thomas Boston's discovery of it in 1704 brought it into general notice.

converse with God, weeping and making supplication.

Although I now forsook, in a sense, all for Christ, yet there was at times such a mixture of seriousness and levity that some might conclude I had no tincture of the fear of God. But my trifling in the day made me often water my couch with tears at night. But I had none to guide me; I did not know a man, among seven hundred, that had any knowledge of such a work as I now felt in my mind.

There was one, indeed, who I thought must have something in him, because he was sober and read good books. But when I began to tell a little of what I felt, I found him an entire stranger to everything of the kind. However, the Lord made up the want of Christian fellowship by sending me such books, from time to time, as surprisingly suited my case—particularly Alleine's *Alarm*,[1] which proved of wonderful service to me. Among his directions for conversion he advises the reader to enter into covenant with God, a form of which he has there given. I took the advice, set apart a day of fasting and prayer, wrote the covenant, and signed it; and it was not long before the Lord showed me He did not despise the day of small things.

There was a society of Methodists in the town, but I knew them not; and when I did they were such objects of universal contempt that I hardly knew what to make of them. However, the last night of this year I ventured to go, and heard

[1] Joseph Alleine (1623–1668), *Alarm to the Unconverted.*

Mr. Oddie.[1] I likewise began the year 1756 with them and from that time never missed an opportunity of hearing, morning and evening.

I think it was in April this year that the Lord justified me by His grace. I used to spend all my time in bed, while awake, in weeping and prayer, and it was in one of these weeping nights that in an instant the Lord brought me out of darkness into His marvellous light. I did not know then what to call it; but its effects were many: I found an uncommon concern for the souls of the soldiers, and the sight of a Methodist used to set my heart on fire with love. Yet for half a year not a soul of them spoke a word to me, though I sometimes threw myself in their way. For much did I long to be acquainted with them; but my shyness was such that I could not break through to speak to them.

Mr. John Wesley and Mr. Thomas Walsh[2] made us a visit this summer, and O what a heaven upon earth did I feel in hearing them! and yet I could not speak to them for my life. At length that serious man, Mr. Thomas Seccombe, took notice of me; and when he was about to leave Limerick desired Sidney Hoey (a mother in Israel she was to me and many of the soldiers) to get acquainted with me. She brought me to her house, and the same day to a class-meeting, which was a day of gladness to me; for I had often found Solomon's words fulfilled, 'Woe to him that is alone when he falleth.'

[1] James Oddie. See *Wesley's Works*, iii. 115, xii. 190.
[2] See *Early Methodist Preachers*, vol. iii.

For when I fell into perplexities and temptations I had no one to help me, but now I found the real benefit of having fellowship with a loving people.

Part of 1757 and 1758 I spent at Dublin, and found their fellowship there also of very great service. The preachers were lively, and faithful lovers of discipline. The society retained much of their simplicity and teachableness, and were in a good degree prepared for the blessed revival which followed some time after, under Mr. John Manners.[1]

It was of uncommon advantage to me to be among the Methodists at a time when both the preachers and people loved all our discipline, and practised it. I saw the blessed consequences, for few cared to stay among us but such as retained their fervour for the whole of religion. False brethren especially were soon tired, and went to the Independents, Anabaptists, or Moravians. But with great simplicity we used to crowd to the sacrament at St. Patrick's in Dublin, or the cathedral at Limerick, every Sabbath. These were happy times to me; for although I was bred a Presbyterian (if I was bred anything), yet the love of God threw down the walls of partition, and made me love to be there, where I found most of the people of God. I soon saw our plan to be more noble than any poor, narrow dissenting scheme whatever, as intending

[1] See Wesley's *Journal*, July 26, 1762. Manners became one of Wesley's preachers in 1758 and died of consumption at York, saying, 'The way is quite clear; my heart is at liberty.'—*Journal*, April 28, 1764.

the good of thousands and tens of thousands in the great bodies of the established churches; and I am still convinced that our present situation is infinitely better calculated for general good than the best-planned separation that can be conceived.

What occasioned my commencing a preacher was as follows: In September, 1758, we returned to Limerick; and as Government resolved to shoot a deserter in every city, *in terrorem*, the lot fell on a young man in our regiment to die in Limerick. His name was Joseph Newton, and he was a Derbyshire man, twenty-two years of age. I longed to talk with him; but as he was kept in a public guard-house, with no place of retirement, I could not tell how to speak to or pray with him among so many people. But when I found the adjutant had been to inform him that he must die on Monday (this was on the Tuesday before), I saw I had no time to lose. I went in, and found him weeping as if his heart would break, and reading a *Whole Duty of Man* with all his might—like a drowning man catching at anything to save him. I spoke a few words to him then, and again in the evening, though with uncommon reluctance, there being many soldiers round us. I prayed with him, and found very great freedom to speak to him and to all that were present. He had no plea, but saw himself an undone sinner without help, and almost without hope. Some of us visited him twice or thrice a day, and on Thursday his soul was set at liberty. From that time he witnessed a good confession to all that spoke to him. Every

one that saw him go to the place where he was shot could not but admire the serene joy that appeared in his countenance. He said but little, but his calm, happy death made a deep impression on many of our soldiers; for they could not but discern the difference between him and one they saw die awhile before at Dublin, who showed the greatest reluctance, the field-officer of the day being obliged to ride up to him several times to tell him he must die; while Joseph Newton was not above ten minutes on his knees before he dropped the signal, and went to Paradise.

I thought now was the time to try what could be done among the soldiers. I therefore told several that as many as had a mind might come to my room every night after roll-calling, and I would sing, read, and pray with them as well as I could. They came, and crowded my room, and in a little while I had a class of them. But about the beginning of the year 1759 I was ordered for Scotland on the recruiting service. I found this not to be easy work for a Christian; yet, through mercy, I was kept from outward sin.

After an absence of four months, the French being expected to invade Ireland, we were ordered to join the regiment, which lay encamped near Kilkenny, and I found my little flock, having had no one to look after them, were all scattered. The first morning we met (in a field adjoining) there were but three of us. But our number increased every time we met, and before our camp broke up I had a little society gathered again. And here it was that I got the name of a preacher; for it being frequently late in

the evenings before we could meet, before I had sung and prayed our light was gone out, so that I could not see to read, but was obliged to say something to them without a book, or send them away empty.

It was well I did not begin to preach among very knowing men, for they might soon have silenced me, as a little thing would have done it; but here there was none to hinder me but the commanding officer, and he did not choose to do it. Though he did not like the Methodists, yet he wanted us all to be very good, as we did not know how soon our valour might be tried by the French. Therefore we had very strict orders against swearing, drunkenness, &c.; but those orders did not effect any great reformation.

When we left the camp, as we still expected an invasion, we were scattered abroad in cantonments all over the south of Ireland. This hurt such of us as were weak in the faith very much. None can tell but such as have tried how hard it is for a soldier to stand his ground among so many unreasonable as well as ungodly men; for such were most of the officers as well as soldiers—men whose tender mercies were cruel.

I had myself suffered much loss in my mind for a year, and consequently had little inclination for preaching. Hence, when we got the route for Galway, I was not at all sorry that there was no society to solicit me to preach among them. Even my friends among the officers were much concerned for me, as many sergeants were preferred to commissions: they said they doubted they could do nothing for me, as I made myself

so ridiculous. Indeed, this did not move me. But my unhappiness of mind was the great hindrance to my preaching. Yet in Galway it was that I had the most clear, undoubted seals to my mission, in the conviction and conversion of souls who never had heard any other Methodist preacher. Some of them are a comfort to me to this day, and some of them are fallen asleep in Jesus.

In 1761 we marched for Dublin again, and the following year back to Galway. All this time, from 1758 to 1763, I walked in darkness, and had no light. I fell into it by degrees, but by what particular thing I am at a loss to know. But this I know, my case was truly deplorable; and yet I did not give way to any known sin, neither did I miss any means of grace. Nay, I often went to the Lord's table when, to all sense and feeling, I was as dead as a stone. My gracious tears were all dried up. My stony heart could not melt. And yet I heard the greatest preachers, read the best books I knew, and conversed or corresponded with the most gracious Christians I could hear of. Nay, I frequently exhorted or preached the whole time; yea, and in that season had apparent success to my labours. I remark this to refute an idle conceit that none are fit to teach others but such as are happy themselves. I know that many times, though I forgot it while preaching, I was as miserable as a devil, both before and after. And it was often suggested to me, 'Judas may cast out devils, and notwithstanding all this be only an outcast.' I often saw myself

like one enclosed all around with hewn stone; my strength and my hope perished from the Lord. As I knew very little of myself when the Lord justified me, He saw good to show me now my utter helplessness, by leading me into the painful school of self-knowledge. And a dull scholar I proved, being five years in learning what others have learned in less than five months.

Yet notwithstanding my wretchedness, our little society at Galway was wonderfully blessed. As there was about this time a glorious revival in many parts of the three kingdoms, I communicated to them, from time to time, the intelligence I received of the work, and the fire soon kindled among them also. All were happy or in earnest but me; and I durst tell very few my sad case, for fear of hurting them. This was often the language of my heart:

My soul in sin so rooted stands,
  No common miracle can move:
I know my spirit's cure demands
  Thy whole omnipotence of love.

But whether Thou hast ever healed
  A spirit so desperate as mine,
It lies, alas! from me concealed,
  In lowest depths of love divine.[1]

If it be asked, What could induce me to continue in the means of grace? I answer, I never doubted my former experience of the truth and reality of religion; and, besides an unseen hand that upheld me, I retained a full conviction that in the favour of God alone there was life and

[1] *Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley*, iv. 361.

happiness. So I was determined to be happy in the favour of God, or refuse every other comfort.

It was when I was thus in darkness and in the deep that the Lord, in a moment, restored to me the joy of His salvation. This was like a plenteous shower upon a parched and dry land, that soon made my soul like a watered garden. The Lord now led me into green pastures, beside the still waters. What a change was this! The soul that was before all tumult and confusion was now all joy and peace through believing. This was about June, 1763.

And yet I soon found I had not attained what J. Dillon and S. Hoey informed me they had attained; namely, a mind constantly stayed upon God, and kept in perfect peace.

Being about this time confined to my room by a violent inflammation in my cheek, my pain made me pray the more earnestly that the peace of God might keep my heart and mind also. The Lord heard and gave me a glorious answer. I felt such a sudden and such a delightful change as I never before conceived possible. My joy was indeed unspeakable, my hope full of immortality, and my peace flowed like a river. I then understood those words as I never did before: 'We all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.'

Just then we were ordered to the north of Ireland, to quell a set of rioters called Hearts of Oak. Being something better, I marched on till we came to Carrick-on-Shannon, where our

surgeon told me I must go no farther at the peril of my life. My excessive pain, and the being left behind, would at some other times have tried me sufficiently; but now,

All was calm, and joy, and peace.

And here it was that I first understood how the blessed martyrs could clap their hands in the flames; for although for some nights my pain was excruciating, yet all was tranquillity within.

The little society here, and the M'Neily's family in particular, took remarkable care of me. The Lord grant they may find mercy of Him in that day! This state continued several months; but having none to direct me, and not being sufficiently aware of the need there was for constant watchfulness and prayer, I fell by degrees from that heaven of love.

In the beginning of 1764 I was called to suffer a little for the testimony of Jesus. And indeed but a little; for what were a few threatenings, a little reproach and shame, a few stones or rotten eggs, to what many of the dear servants of God have suffered even in this age?

Our lieutenant-colonel did not care what a soldier's religion was, provided he did his duty; but our major, a warm blunderer, to whom the command of the regiment was left for a time, thought it a disgrace to have a sergeant a preacher among them. He therefore resolved to drive me out of preaching, if possible. I shall not enter upon a detail of the several means he used for this purpose, as I believe he was ashamed of them himself before I left him. He found me

so much the soldier, however, as not to be frightened out of what I thought was my duty. Yet I found it no easy matter to walk the streets of Newry, a gazing-stock to both old and young. At last, as he found he could not prevent my preaching, he hit upon a method to get quit of me; namely, to put me into the tenth company, which was soon to be reduced. And thus it was that the Lord thrust me out into the harvest, for I was determined not to leave the army till some clear providence set me free. Before the time came for the reduction of the company some of the friendly officers wanted me to stay, and said they would get the major to put some old sergeant in my place. I begged they would not, and they acquiesced. Some of them, indeed, wished I could persuade all their men to be religious, for they had no trouble with the Methodist soldiers, but enough with the others. Yet they told me they feared what our enthusiasm would turn to, and mentioned Cromwell, who could preach and pray one part of the day, and kill and plunder the other.

Never were words more applicable to these fearful men than the following:

> The same in your esteem,
> Falsehood and truth ye join;
> The wild pretender's dream,
> And real work divine;
>
> Between the substance and the show
> No difference you can find;
> For colours all, full well we know,
> Are equal to the blind.[1]

[1] *Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley*, v. 367.

Were the chaplains men of real piety and courage, much good might be done in the army; but the chaplaincy is generally a kind of sinecure, and the care of souls is left to any worthless wretch that will do it at an easy rate. When we lay in one city the care of four or five regiments was left to an unhappy man who was an object of common ridicule among the soldiers for his perpetual drunkenness.

But although my commanding officer could not hinder me from preaching, and God gave me to see the fruit of my labours, yet I was not thoroughly satisfied in my own mind that it was my duty to preach. But this spring, at Waterford, God revived His work wonderfully among that society, and set my mind free from every scruple; so that when Mr. Wesley wrote me word that if I left the army he had immediate work for me I had no objection but the precarious state of my health; for by preaching loud and long, and by reading at all hours, I had brought myself so low that our surgeon sometimes thought me in a consumption. Mr. Wesley told me, in answer to my objection, that our Master had all power in heaven and in earth, and that as my day so should my strength be; and in the latter end of 1764 I found myself at liberty to go where Providence directed.

I was now entering upon a new scene of life; and though I was twenty-eight years of age, I was an utter stranger to mankind. Hence I imagined that blunt honesty, with innocency, would bear me through anything; but I have since learned that we need the wisdom of the

serpent as well as the innocence of the dove in our dealings with men, even about their souls. I mention this as an apology for some parts of my conduct, which had not always a due mixture of calm wisdom, my native impetuosity often hurrying me beyond the bounds of moderation —a thing too common with well-meaning zealous young men.

I would observe farther that I was kept in such watchfulness and tenderness of conscience, nine years after I knew something of religion among the soldiery, as, to my grief and shame, I have not always retained since that period. I was then continually among the open enemies of religion, which partly obliged me to vigilance; but being since then chiefly among the professed friends of religion, how often have I been off my watch! But whatever I have fallen into, I could never preach till I recovered a sense of the divine acceptance. O where are we safe, beyond the power of sinning, but in Paradise?

When I came to Dublin our society and preachers received me in the kindest manner, and a comfortable time I spent with them that winter.

One of our captains, without my knowledge, now recommended me to a late nobleman, who, he told me, had an easy place for me, and desired my answer in two or three days. I thanked him, and told him I had chosen another employment.

Here I was acquainted with Dr. Davis, whose case is worth relating. He was formerly remarkable for a peculiar lively turn of wit on all

occasions, and happy was the company that could get him to spend the evening with them. But being persuaded by a friend to hear John Carr, one of our local preachers, his companions, alas! lost their merry Andrew. He told me that he went to see the preacher merely to take him off, as he expressed it. 'But,' said he, 'while I was leaning on my cane, looking at him through my fingers during his first prayer, an arrow went to my heart which sent me home bruised and wounded.' He then sought the true Physician, who soon brought him to a healthful mind.

The regiment of dragoons of which he was surgeon marched into Dublin while I was there. One day, being at the soldiers' infirmary, a serious man, the porter of the house, one Francis May, said to him, 'Sir, we want prayer and a word of exhortation very much in this house: would you pray with two or three, sir, if I get them together?' 'Really, Frank,' said the doctor, 'I never prayed in my life but with two or three serious people, and I know not how to begin with any other.' 'Sir,' said Frank, 'it is high time you should begin. Begin to-day, sir; begin now!' The doctor was prevailed on. Away went Frank, and informed them through all the house that Dr. Davis was going to preach to them. Down came every soul that could crawl—the sick, the lame, and the lazy—to the long room, where the chaplains used to read prayers. Away came Frank to the doctor. 'Now, sir,' said he, 'I have got a few of them.' When the doctor came to the room-door, and saw the place full, he was going back. 'Nay, sir,' said Frank, 'you

cannot go back for your life! There they are; the Lord has delivered them into your hands, and will you start from His work?' In short, the doctor went in, stood on a form, sung, and prayed; and having his pocket Bible with him, he read a portion to them, discoursed an hour and a half, and from that time preached to the soldiers wherever he could. As I knew his dangerous situation, I was a little afraid for him. But God took care of him; for going to visit some prisoners in Newgate who had a malignant fever, he caught the infection, and finished his course rejoicing in God his Saviour.

We had several remarkable conversions while I was in Ireland. One or two more may be mentioned. We often think it lost labour to talk to a man about his soul while drunk; but I know to the contrary. I knew one in the north of Ireland who, going home one summer evening much in liquor, saw a crowd of people on a green at some distance; and imagining it to be a cock-fight, he would see it before he went home. The preacher, being in the application of his discourse, said, 'Are there any drunkards here?' &c. The poor fellow, looking up, said, 'Yes, I am one.' At that instant he was seized with such concern for his soul as never left him till he became a new man.

I add another remarkable case. We had a little society in the county of Wexford, who used to be much pestered with a Popish mob. They met in a long barn, with the door near one end. The rabble wanted sadly to know what they did at their private meetings; but as the

barn belonged to one that was no Methodist, they durst not break open the door. At length they contrived that one of them should get into the barn before the people came, and let his companions in at a proper time. To conceal himself the better, he got into a sack, and lay down behind the door. When the society were all in, they fastened the door as usual. Soon after came the mob, hallooing and shouting to their friend to let them in. But God found other work for him; for being charmed with the first hymn, he thought it a thousand pities (as he afterwards said) to disturb them while singing it. And when the prayer began the power of God did so confound him that he roared out with might and main, and, not having power to get out of the sack, lay bawling and screaming. At last one ventured to see what was the matter, and, helping him out, brought him up, confessing his sins, and crying for mercy, which was the beginning of a lasting work in his soul.

But to return. This winter three of the preachers going to Chapel-Izod, where one of them was to preach, as there was room in the coach, they invited me to accompany them. A river through which we were to pass happened to overflow part of the road. Our coachman, thinking to drive in the most shallow water, drove near a wall; but the wheels turning on a large stone overset us. Through mercy we got out, with little more damage than being well wet; but the coachman stood up to the neck, like one distracted, crying, 'Murder, murder!' At last he got out; and then I and two others (Mr.

Johnson and Dempster) walked home, and were no worse.

In the spring, there being no preacher in the Waterford Circuit, I went thither, and spent some time very agreeably among my former acquaintances. And now it was that I saw what spirit many of the Irish Papists were of. While I carried a sword by my side few of them cared to speak their minds; but now, that restraint being removed, several of them told me to my face that they thought it would be doing both God and the church service to burn all such as me in one fire! The infatuation of many of them, owing to the ignorance they are kept in, cannot be described; for upon the least pretence, and often without any, they rise in large parties, well armed, to destroy the lives and properties of their neighbours, oppose the magistracy, and even insult the army.

About this time a party of the light horse, being on foot, were conveying one of the Whiteboys to Kilkenny jail. In going through a village the Papists crossed the way with a mock funeral. When they had got the soldiers in the midst they threw down their coffin full of stones, and fell on old and young with the greatest fury. The soldiers defended themselves, till the sergeant and three or four more were killed, and several desperately wounded. For this five of them were hanged at Kilkenny. They all died 'innocent,' they said, 'as the child unborn!' So did five more, who were executed a little while before for burning a mill and burying the miller up to the neck. I could not

understand at first how most of the Papists that die here by the hands of the executioner die declaring their innocency, till I found out the secret: having confessed all their crimes to the priest, and received his absolution, they believed themselves guiltless, and were forbidden to make confession to the heretics. However, we had the comfort to see several of them brought to the experience of real Christianity. And there is no doubt but if there were a few preachers of Mr. Walsh's spirit,[1] we should see many more.

Mr. Wesley having signified to me, some time before, that I might travel with him if I had a mind, I gladly embraced the opportunity, and met him at Limerick, in June, 1765. This and the next year I had an opportunity of seeing most of our large societies in the three kingdoms; and had my health, capacity, and industry kept pace with my opportunities, it might have been a time of extraordinary improvement.[2] Besides all other advantages, I had constantly before me such an example of redeeming time as I hope will be of service to me while I live. But however profitable my travelling with Mr. Wesley might be, as the exercise was too much I was obliged to give it up.

It was also of service to me to spend some time in London, among some of our old, happy Methodists, who bore with my weaknesses,

[1] See *Early Methodist Preachers*, vol. iii.

[2] See Wesley's *Journal*, March 19, and June 24, 1766, when Wesley and Wright were embogged near the Solway.

and by their prayers and example confirmed me more and more in the truth as it is in Jesus.

What the Lord has been doing by me in Kent, Essex, Norwich, Manchester, Macclesfield, in the Yarm and Thirsk [1] circuits, and in Scotland is known to Him. I bless God that I have seen the work prosper and increase in most of the circuits I have been in; not indeed in consequence of my preaching, so much as by some regard to our discipline and the labour of my colleagues. I have been happy in having those in general with me who were not drones, but hearty in the work of God. And their love to discipline has not been labour in vain. To God alone be all the glory!

Before I conclude I must not forget to mention one circumstance, in order to encourage others, and to justify the observation 'that we hardly know what we are capable of till we are put to the trial.'

When I was in Scotland I remarked that many of the clergy were men of sense and piety, and took real pains in their work. And yet there was in many places a want of care and zeal for the spiritual welfare of the poor Highlanders. Many of these, coming for employment to the larger towns, were destitute of all help for their souls, as they did not understand English. In Edinburgh and Glasgow there have

[1] James Rogers, who was appointed to labour with him at Thirsk, says: 'I was truly thankful for such a fellow labourer; for he acted the part of a father to me. We had the hearts of the people, and the Lord added many souls to our ministry.'—*Early Methodist Preachers*, iv. 299.

been places of worship built for them within these few years, and well supplied; but in Aberdeen, Perth, and Greenock they still had none to help. When Mr. M'Nab[1] went to Scotland, in 1769, he began to preach to them as well as he could, and wanted me to come to his help. Mr. Wesley accordingly appointed me for Scotland at the ensuing Conference, and desired me to try to recover my Erse; but of this I had no hope, as I could not read a verse of it, and never spoke two minutes in it on religious subjects in my life.

However, when I came to Perth, and saw their forlorn condition, several motives induced me to make a trial. I therefore bought a New Testament in the modern Gaelic, and got one of the society who could read it to give me some instructions. By Christmas I had made such a progress that my teacher was positive I could preach in it, and would needs invite the Highlanders to come and hear me. But I knew my deficiency better than he did; however, I was prevailed upon to let him invite them. He gave out the psalm, and sang it for me. When I began to pray in Erse I should have been set fast had I not learned the Lord's Prayer beforehand. When I began to speak I was often obliged to break off and address the people in English. But, by the grace of God, in less than four years I could officiate in that language two hours together, without a word of English. While we were thus employed, the ministers in Perth, and in several

[1] See Wesley's *Works*, xii. 347.

other places, wished us good luck in the name of the Lord.

This was by far the most delightful work I ever had. But it was often hard enough, as I commonly preached at Greenock in English at seven in the morning; then spent two hours, from ten to twelve, with the Highlanders; walked to Port Glasgow, and preached in the streets at four; then walked back to Greenock, and preached at six o'clock, and then met the society. Although by this means I had many an aching head and pained breast, yet it was delightful to see hundreds attending to my blundering preaching, with streaming eyes and attention still as night; or to hear them, in their simple way, singing the praises of God in their own tongue. If ever God said to my heart, 'Go, and I will be with thee,' it was then, when, with much trembling and deep sighs, I have gone to preach to them, hardly knowing what to say. I extol the name of my adorable Master, that my labours were not in vain. How gladly would I have spent my life with these dear souls! But my health would not permit it, so I was obliged to leave them.

To conclude. How graciously did my heavenly Father strive with me by His Spirit even from my infant days! And when I was an outcast, and lost as to anything of religion, He reclaimed the wanderer and brought me to His fold; then led me into the wilderness to show me my heart; healed my backslidings, comforted and fortified me for sufferings; and, knowing my feebleness,

led me gradually on to preach to those who most needed my assistance.

And when He saw a little affliction needful, He sent it. And a profitable time it proved to me—all thanks to the Sender! I have since seen such beauty in holiness, and in the imitation of Christ, and have had such discoveries of the boundless love of God, as I never had before. O for an eternity to praise Him in!

If ever man could say the following lines, surely I may:

> Pardoned for all that I have done,
> My mouth as in the dust I hide,
> And glory give to God alone,
> My God for ever pacified!

STOCKTON, *March*, 1781.

The following account of his sickness and death was given by the Rev. James Creighton,[1] who was a witness of both:

In the beginning of the winter of 1790 Mr. Wright got up early, and going out suddenly into the air to the chapel [City Road] caught cold, which fixed upon his lungs and threw him into a decline. He struggled through the winter with great difficulty; and when attending Mr. Wesley's funeral, March 9, 1791, said it was most probable that he should be the next that should be laid in that vault, which proved to be the fact.

On the first of April he came to my house[2] by way of a change of air. He had then a

[1] *Arminian Magazine*, 1791, p. 620.
[2] In Hoxton Square.

violent pain in both his sides, so as not to be able to lie on either of them, nor yet on his back, as his cough was exceedingly troublesome. His fever was high and his pulse quick every night, till towards morning, when he fell into a sweat, which gave him a little temporary ease. He continued thus for about a fortnight after he came to my house, when he was seized one night with an uncommon and violent pain, which he supposed to be a symptom of immediate death: he therefore sent to call me up, as I had been in bed for some time. I sat and conversed with him till morning, and indeed it was a truly profitable time to me. Notwithstanding his excruciating pain, he spoke a great deal; his voice was pretty strong, and he was in the full triumph of faith. I did not think death was so near as he apprehended. He related to me much of what he then felt, though it was impossible to find language fully to express it; and he told me a great part of his experience for thirty years back. He said that in the year 1762 he had entered into a superior light and greater liberty than he had ever enjoyed before, for he had previous to that time walked in a kind of darkness; but ever since that time had walked constantly in the light of God's countenance, and would not be satisfied any day without a direct and clear witness of his acceptance. It was his custom while he was at my house (and I suppose it had been so before) to desire to be left alone at seven o'clock in the evening, in order that he might commune and wrestle with God.

He said that one evening in the last week, when his wife returned at the limited time, he desired her to retire for another half-hour, as he was not yet fully satisfied. But she had not been gone out of the room five minutes, when the Lord filled him with such consolation and such joy as was unspeakable, which he looked upon as a token that God would shortly take him to Himself.

'While I felt [said he] the mighty operation of the Spirit my whole frame was agitated in a most wonderful manner; but I did not desire the Lord to stay His hand, for I knew He could support me under this mighty outpouring of His Spirit. I had many promises in my illness that He would sprinkle me with clean water, and now He gives me a full manifestation of it. I am a witness that the blood of Christ does cleanse from all sin. I do not desire anything to be said about me; only you may tell the people for their encouragement that the Lord has finished His work, has cleansed, and filled me with all His fullness. O the goodness of God to a poor sinner! Can there be a greater proof of the immortality as well as of the activity of the soul in its state of separation than this which I now feel! Surely it cannot be that the soul will sleep till the resurrection. I used sometimes to reason about the doctrine of materialists, and about persons who were restored from drowning; but now all my doubts are vanished. O what a weight of glory will that be, when Thy weight of grace, O Lord, is now so great! The Lord sets my poor heart

at ease, though it is now burning with a fever. Some nights ago He told me that He would do more for me than I could ask or think. O that the world might taste and see what I now experience! O, I could sing, if I had strength! The Lord maketh my very bones to rejoice. O how kind, how merciful art Thou! Hast Thou not made up all at last? This is not mere imagination or the effects of a disordered brain! No, no, what I now feel is better than crowns or thrones!

> O that the world might taste and see
> The riches of His grace!
> The arms of love that compass me
> Would all mankind embrace.

I often used to sing these words:

> Happy, if with my latest breath
> I may but gasp His name!
> Preach Him to all, and cry in death
> Behold! Behold the Lamb!

O, I can now do it; He does enable me, a poor worm, to do it, who endeavoured, in my little way, to preach Him, and point others to Him.'

At another time he repeated 'Jesus, Thou art all compassion,' &c., and then added, 'I pass through the valley of death; but it is not dark—all is clear, all is light about me.'

About a week after this he had another remarkable night, which was chiefly spent in intercession, and that in a most astonishing manner, as his wife informed me. In the morn-

ing he gave me an account of it, and how the whole world seemed as it were spread before him. First he prayed for his wife and near relations, then for the Methodist Connexion, then the Jews, infidels, and heathens of all sorts; that they might shortly be brought in, and taste the sweetness of redeeming grace.

It is remarkable that from this time the pain in his side was considerably abated, so that he could lie down on his back, and get up pretty freely. Yet still he suffered a great deal every night with the high fever and incessant cough.

He had a musical ear, and a good taste for poetry. He had made remarks on some of the hymns in our large Hymn-Book, which I have found after his death. He often sang the following lines during his illness, and sang them with a shower of tears:

O might I with Thy saints aspire,
The meanest of that dazzling choir,
  Who chant Thy praise above;
Mixt with the bright musician band,
May I a heavenly harper stand
  And sing the song of love!

O might I die that awe to prove,
That prostrate awe that dares not move
  Before the great Three-One!
To shout by turns the bursting joy,
And all eternity employ
  In songs around the Throne![1]

[1] *Poetical Works of John and Charles Wesley*, iv. 244: 'The Musician's Hymn.'

Some of the last lines which he was able to repeat were these :

> When from the dust of death I rise
> To claim my mansion in the skies,
> This, this shall then be all my plea,
> Jesus hath lived, hath died for me !

On May 2, after a wearisome night, he got some sleep, and then sent for me to rejoice with him that he felt so sweetly composed and his body refreshed. Indeed, he always expressed much thankfulness for a little respite from pain ; but no word dropped from him that bore the most remote implication of murmuring or complaining. He mentioned how suitable to his case that hymn was, and the peculiar sweetness there was in it :

> My sufferings all to Thee are known.

He generally expressed himself with a smile, even when he felt very great pain in both his sides, and through his whole body. Once he expressed something like a fear lest the enemy might be permitted to attack him again, and mentioned the case of Thomas Walsh. 'If so great and pious a man (said he) had such a conflict,[1] and was in some degree of darkness not long before his death, what may I not expect ? '

I was under a necessity of being absent on a journey to the North for a week, during which time the enemy was permitted to buffet him, and harass him with strange thoughts ; and he was eager to relate the circumstances of it to

[1] See *Early Methodist Preachers,* iii. 278 ; Green's *Thomas Walsh,* p. 107.

me on my return home the night before he died. It appeared to me to arise partly, or chiefly, from the debilitated state of his body and the weakness of his head, of which the enemy strove to take advantage; but the crafty foe was finally put to flight by Him who shed His blood to save sinners.

The next morning he dozed a good deal, and when I went in to see and ask him how he did he said, 'I am getting more rest.' 'Yes,' said I, 'and you will shortly get more—you will soon enter into a glorious rest.' Some time after this he said to his wife, 'Jesus is come!—He is now in my heart: now let me muse awhile.' He continued very sensible to the last, and sunk gradually, with a serene and placid countenance, into the arms of the Redeemer, and expired without a sigh or a groan whilst a few friends were commending his spirit into the hands of Him who gave it, about six o'clock in the evening of May 13, 1791, having just completed the fifty-fifth year of his age.

In the *Minutes* for 1791, in answer to the question 'Who have died this year?' we read, 'Duncan Wright, an old, faithful labourer in the vineyard of the Lord. Gravity and steadiness were two eminent parts of his character. After a useful life, spent in the service of his divine Master, he gave indubitable proofs, in his last illness, that he was going to rest from his labours in Abraham's bosom.'

Mr. Wright died at Britannia Row, Hoxton; and his remains were interred in Mr. Wesley's

vault, behind the chapel in City Road. A marble tablet, which has since disappeared, was placed in the chapel. It described him as 'a truly upright and pious man, a faithful defender of the Word of God, an ardent lover and conscientious observer of the Methodist discipline, and for about twenty years an acceptable and useful preacher of God's Word.'

THOMAS HANBY[1]

Letter to the Rev. John Wesley

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

My father removed from Barnard Castle in the county of Durham, to live in the city of Carlisle, where he was employed by a company of gentlemen to carry on a branch of the woollen manufactory. Here he married my mother, who was a person of some small property; by whom he had three children, myself being the youngest. I was born December 16, 1733.

After some years the factory was given up, and my parents came to live at Barnard Castle again. My mother died when I was seven years of age, and my father soon after. He was much addicted to drunkenness, which made him neglect the care of his family, by which means he reduced his helpless offspring to a variety of afflictions. I lived some time with an aunt, who had been a person of considerable fortune, but was reduced by the extravagance of my uncle, my father's brother. It is true I was put to school for some years, but made no considerable progress in learning. Before I was twelve I was put out to a trade, whereby a kind Providence

[1] *The Arminian Magazine*, 1780, with portrait.

enabled me to provide for myself such things as I stood in need of.

The first serious impression that I remember was when I was about six years of age. I was in a yard belonging to the house where we lived, in Barnard Castle, and looking up to heaven I was struck with wonder, and called aloud, 'God Almighty.' But such horror seized me as made me run home and shut the door with all speed. My mother reproved me, and said I had been doing some mischief; but I assured her I had not. She then insisted upon knowing the cause of my uncommon haste, and of my shutting the door with such violence. I told her I was in the yard, and called aloud, 'God Almighty,' and I was afraid. What she thought I cannot say; but she said no more to me upon the subject. A few years after I was greatly alarmed by my sister talking of the day of judgement, which I had not heard of before. But these serious impressions wore off, and I began to be

Rough in my manners, and untamed my mind.

When I was about thirteen, hearing the bishop was coming to confirm the children in our town, I began to think some kind of reformation and preparation was necessary. Accordingly I applied to a relation, one John Robinson, a maltster, who was a sincere man, and esteemed and beloved by all men. He taught me all he knew; namely, many questions and answers, with a great number of prayers; instructed me in the Church Catechism (for, though I had learned it when at school, I had now entirely forgot it), and, in

short, made me, I thought, a very good boy. The Sabbath came when the bishop was to confirm, and I, having passed my examination with the minister, was introduced to the bishop. This was in the forenoon; and towards evening I went with some of my companions into the fields, and played at our usual games. But before I went to bed horror of conscience seized me, and I thought I heard a voice say, 'Thy confirmation is made void, for thou hast broken the Sabbath.' What to do now I knew not. However, I began to make myself good, by reading and repeating many prayers.

In this state I continued till it pleased God, of His infinite mercy, to send a poor man, one Joseph Cheesebrough, a shoemaker and a Methodist, from Leeds, who having received the truth himself was willing to impart it to others—not by preaching or exhortation, but by friendly discourse with his former acquaintance, for he was a Barnard Castle man. Joseph Garnet, one of our preachers, now with God, and a few others, first received the truth. They met together in an upper chamber for fear of the mob. They read the Scriptures, and the books you had then published, sang hymns, and prayed. I went one evening with a few of my ungodly companions; and as they were disposed to mock, I joined with them. However, I found something within that was far from justifying my conduct, and a secret persuasion that those despised and persecuted people were able to show me the way of salvation. I went again the next night (for they met every night), and begged I might be

permitted to come in among them. Accordingly I was admitted, and found myself sweetly drawn to seek an unknown God. From that time I missed no opportunity of assembling with them. My cousin Robinson went at the same time; but the minister sent for him, and laboured to convince him that he and the Methodists were all in an error; and, to prove it, he showed him several old Puritanical books, which treated on the new birth, &c., and told him, 'It is a false religion, because it is an old religion!' My cousin, at that time, and for four years after, was an entire stranger to himself and his need of a Saviour; the minister prevailed on him to leave the Methodists; and my great opinion of his piety made me, though contrary to my inclinations, leave them also. The minister told my cousin, provided he would form a religious society upon rational principles, he would sometimes come himself. He accordingly did, and in a little time we had a larger society than the Methodists, of formal professors who could play at cards, take their pleasures, and conform to the world in almost everything. During this period God still worked upon my tender mind, and I was fervent in prayer, reading, and every other exercise of religious duty. I was sometimes much tempted, but knew not that it was temptation. I also found remarkable comforts, but knew not what they meant. I thought I would pray at the same place again; which I did, and was greatly surprised not to meet with the same joy. In this state of ignorance I continued till our society dwindled away, and none remained

but my cousin and me. I said to him one night, 'I fear we are wrong in leaving the Methodists; we can meet with none who can show us the way of salvation like them. Come, and let us go and join them again.' He had some objections, but my importunity prevailed with him. Accordingly we went, and, it being their class-meeting, we were admitted. In about twelve months he found peace, and ever after continued in the way, a very serious, steady, and circumspect walker, till the Lord took him to Himself. About this time Mr. Whitford, the first Methodist preacher, came to Barnard Castle. He preached abroad to a very large but unruly congregation. I was much affected, especially when he repeated those words, 'O, let not Christ's precious blood be shed in vain!' (Mr. Whitford left the Methodists some years after, and turned Calvinist, and I suppose would now be shocked to use the words which had such an effect upon my mind that I never could forget them.) After Mr. Whitford, we were favoured with Mr. Tucker, Mr. Turnough, Mr. John Fenwick, Mr. Rowel, and others, who often preached to us while the blood ran down their faces, by the blows and pointed arrows thrown at them while they were preaching. Soon after, you, sir, paid us a visit, but were interrupted by the fire-engine being played on the audience. I and our few friends did all we could to prevent it, but were overpowered by the multitude.[1]

God continued to draw me with strong desires, and I spent much time praying in the fields,

[1] Wesley's *Journal*, May 25, 1752.

woods, and barns. Any place and every place was now a closet to my mourning soul, who longed for the Day-star to arise in my poor benighted heart. And it pleased Infinite Mercy while I was praying in a dark place (greatly terrified for fear I should see the devil) that the Lord set my weary soul at liberty. The next day the Lord was pleased to withdraw the ecstasy of joy, though I had no condemnation, and I had wellnigh given up my confidence, thinking it was nothing but a heated imagination. But the Lord met me again, while I was in the fields, my usual place of retirement; and from that time I was enabled to keep a weak hold of the precious Lord Jesus.

When I was about eighteen I had a desire to see Newcastle-upon-Tyne, thinking, if I was among more experienced Christians I might be taught the ways of the Lord more perfectly. I stayed a few months there, and boarded with our worthy friend, Mr. Robert Carr, whose tenderness for my youth, and truly Christian behaviour, were of singular use to me, for which I shall ever love and esteem him. By attending preaching night and morning, and conversing with many mature Christians, my understanding was much enlightened; and I think I may say, through all-sufficient mercy, that I grew in the fear and knowledge of God.

When I returned to Barnard Castle I stayed some time there, and told my beloved friends all I could remember of the many excellent sermons I had heard in Newcastle, the nature of their discipline, and the Christian spirit of the society in that place.

Having profited so much by my Newcastle journey, I thought I would take one more journey to Leeds, and after that I meant to settle at home for life. Accordingly I went, and here Providence was equally kind, in casting my lot into Mr. Richard Watkinson's family, where they put themselves to some inconvenience in boarding and accommodating me with a very agreeable lodging. I have often had a thankful remembrance of their kindness to me, and I hope the Lord will reward them for it.

My business now was that of stuff-making; and as I loved to labour hard, I was able to procure more than my necessities required. My method was, as formerly, to be much in the fields, praying and meditating. I also attended all the means of grace, and on the Sabbath I frequently took a walk with Mr. Watkinson into the country, where he preached.

During this period I can truly say I walked in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost; and my delight was in the law of the Lord, and in His law I meditated day and night.

About this time a sudden impression was made upon my mind that I ought to preach the gospel. I concluded it was nothing but temptation, and would not for a moment encourage such a thought. But it came again, and with it 'a horror of great darkness fell upon me,' like that mentioned in Gen. xv. 12, and I was truly miserable. I remembered the wormwood and the gall that the preachers drank at Barnard Castle; and I said in my heart, I will not preach. But the terrors of the Lord made me afraid, and His fear took hold

upon me. I was in great bitterness of spirit because of this conviction. Sometimes I thought it was from God; at other times I thought it was all from the devil. In this perplexed situation I continued some time, without ever mentioning my case to any one. I would frequently retire into my closet, and express myself in words like these: 'Lord, of what use is my existence in this world? I am profitable neither to God nor man! I cannot preach, for I am a fool and a child. O, let me die, for it is better for me to die than to live.'

However, I was willing to preach, provided I was sure it was the will of God concerning me. But

This way, and that, I turn'd my anxious mind,

when a friend of mine, one John Smith, told me of a poor woman in the society who was supposed to be dying, and that she was wonderfully happy. I had read in your tracts the accounts of many happy deaths, but had never seen one. I desired my friend, if he could, to introduce me to see her. He promised to call on me the next night. He did so; and as we were going I prayed to the Lord that He would remove my intolerable load, and that if it was His will I should preach He would show it to the dying saint I was going to visit. I said, 'Lord, Thou canst as easily do this as Thou canst cause her to triumph over death. If Thou wilt but show me a token by which I may know Thy will, then I will preach Thy word wherever Thou shalt please to send me.'

We came to the house where the sick woman lay, and, as I was an entire stranger to her and everybody besides, I stood at a distance. Mr.

Shent[1] came in, and prayed with her; I followed him to tell him our Barnard Castle brethren would be glad of a visit from him. After I had delivered my message I returned to the sick woman, and was told she had made much inquiry for the young man who stood in the corner. I came to the bedside, and she looked me earnestly in the face, and said, 'God has called you to preach the gospel; you have long rejected the call, but He will make you go. Obey the call, obey the call.' She put such an emphasis upon 'He will make you go' that it shocked me exceedingly.

I now resolved, through the grace of God, to make a trial. Accordingly I sent word to Bramley that preaching would be there the next Lord's Day in the morning. As I went along, my mind was perfectly resigned. I did not think about what I should say; but my heart said, 'If He will have me to preach, something will be given me to say that will be profitable; and if He has not sent me, it will be a less cross to be confounded before the people than to be a preacher of the gospel.'

I was rather behind the time, and the people were waiting, expecting brother Watkinson, as usual. They came to me, and asked where he was, and what must be done. I said in my heart, 'The Lord will provide Himself a sacrifice.' I stepped to the place, gave out a hymn, prayed and took those words for my text, 'If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are

[1] William Shent, of Leeds. See Wesley's *Journal*, Feb. 26, 1747, &c.

above.' The people trembled for fear of me, and prayed heartily. God was pleased to visit us: two persons received a sense of pardon. I preached again at noon, and at Armley in the evening. This, dear sir, was my beginning, and what I looked upon as my call from God.

I was now occasionally employed by Mr. Shent and the other preachers to take part of a circuit for them.

In 1754 Brother Mitchell desired me to come and help them in the Staffordshire Circuit for a few months. Accordingly I went to Birmingham, Wednesbury, &c. Brother Crab was then along with us; and, as we were too many for the few places about Birmingham, I made an excursion into the wilds of Derbyshire, preached at Wootton, near Weaver Hill, the Ford, Snelson, and Ashbourne, where there had been no such a being as a Methodist preacher. I had often found a great desire to preach in that town, but was at a loss how to introduce myself. However, I providentially heard of a serious man, Mr. Thomas Thompson, who kept the toll-gate, about half a mile from the town. I took Thomas White with me, from Barton Forge. We came to Mr. Thompson's, and introduced ourselves in the best manner we could. He informed a few of his neighbours that there was a preacher at his house. Accordingly Mr. Hurd's family, Mr. Peach's, and a few others came in the evening; I suppose as many as they durst invite. I talked to them, and expounded a part of the eighth chapter of the Romans. I found much liberty in my

own soul, and the power of God rested upon the people, who were deeply affected. I stayed a few days, preaching morning and evening to as many as the house would hold. Miss Beresford condescended to assemble with us; and the Lord opened her heart, as the heart of Lydia. When I had been preaching Christ as a fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, she cried out, 'O precious gospel! O precious gospel!' From that time she continued steadfast, growing in grace, till the Lord took her in glorious triumph to Himself.[1]

I left Ashbourne for about a fortnight, to visit my new friends in Snelson, Wootton, the Ford, Bottom-house, &c., and returned again. I now found I must preach no more at the toll-gate house: the commissioners of the road had forbidden my friend Mr. Thompson to admit me. But Mr. Hurd, a gentleman farmer, by the desire of his family, whose hearts the Lord had touched, suffered me to preach at his house. It was now that a furious mob arose while I was preaching, and beset the house, and sprang in among us like so many lions. I soon perceived that I was the object of their rage. My mind was variously agitated, yet I durst not but cry aloud as long as I could be heard; but at last I was overpowered with noise. Some of my friends, in defending me, were bleeding among the mob, and with difficulty I escaped out of their hands. But as Mr. Thompson, Mr. Isaac Peach, Mr. Hurd's family, Miss

[1] Wesley calls her 'a sweet but short-lived flower' (*Journal*, April 8, 1755).

Beresford, and a few others remained steady, I was constrained to repeat my visits, till the Lord gave us peace. Mr. Thompson grew in the knowledge and love of God, till the Lord took him to Himself.

In a few weeks I returned again to Leek, and put up at one of the principal inns, in hopes of seeing some of the society, to encourage them to suffer patiently for the sake of Him who suffered death for them. I had ordered dinner; but before it was ready the mob collected together in a large body, and beset the inn. The landlord came to me in great confusion, and entreated me to leave the place immediately, or his house would be pulled down, and I should be murdered. I was obliged to obey. I mounted my horse in the yard, and rode through the mob, amidst stones, dirt, &c., whilst they were gathering in vast numbers from every part of the town, crying, 'Kill him, kill him!' There was from this time no access to Leek till the chief men of this mob died miserably; and of the rest, some went for soldiers, and all of them were dispersed, except one man, who was alive a few months ago, in miserable circumstances.

I had frequently passed through Burton-upon-Trent, in my way to Ashby-de-la-Zouch; and found a desire to preach in that place, which appeared to me to be fit for Him who came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. I obtained leave to preach in a large house belonging to a shoemaker. Many attended, and I had reason to believe some were awakened. I gave out preaching for another day, and went

accordingly. The town was alarmed; and a mob (as I understood afterwards) were hired and made drunk, by the principal persons in town, effectually to prevent my preaching. It was in the winter season, and a dark night. All was quiet till I gave out a hymn. Then they approached the house, broke first the window-shutters, and then dashed the windows in. The head of this mob was a forgeman, half an idiot, who had bound himself under an oath he would that night have my liver. He brought the pipe of a large bellows, with which he made a frightful noise, and which was to be the instrument of my death. He made what way he could to me, but was rather retarded by the multitude that was before him. I observed him with the fury of a fiend, but knew not well what to do. To attempt to preach was in vain, for I could not be heard. I stepped off the chair, and got into a chamber unperceived by my enemy. When he found I was gone he insisted upon going upstairs, and it was impossible to hinder him, and the numbers that were with him. It came into my mind, 'Go downstairs, escape for thy life.' I went down, and walked into the shoemaker's shop unobserved by any one, though I passed through part of the mob. Soon after he got upstairs, searched the closets, beds, chests, &c.; and when he could not find me, foamed at the mouth like a mad dog. Then there was a cry in the street, 'He is in the shop; he is in the shop.' I now concluded all was over with me, and said, 'Lord, give me strength to suffer as a Christian; nor

may I count my life dear unto myself for Thy sake.' I went under the shoemaker's cutting-board. Meantime the mob were not long in breaking open two strong doors that led into the shop. They did not see me; but one of them put down his hand where I was, and cried out, 'He is here; he is here.' I had now no other means to use, so I committed myself into their hands.

They hurried me into the house, and a very stout man, one of those who had been made drunk for the purpose, approached me. But his countenance fell; he took hold of my hand, and said, 'Follow me.' I imagined he intended to take me and throw me into the river, and I was content. I committed myself to the disposal of a kind Providence, expecting nothing but death. With difficulty he got me through the mob; and as he was one of the best boxers in the town, nobody durst oppose him. When we came to the door he drew me short by the corner up a narrow street, put me before him, and said, 'Run.' I made my way to the fields, and he kept behind, keeping the rest off, then helping me over walls and hedges till we had lost them all. I remained in the fields till midnight, and returned with a friend into town, and lodged till early in the morning, when I rode away.

After some time I went again to Leek, stayed ten days, and joined twenty-four in a society. A lawyer then raised a furious mob, who beset the house where I lodged. My few friends kept them off for a considerable time. But at last

they lost all patience: they broke in, and were determined to drag me away; but it pleased the Lord that a woman, who then neither feared God nor regarded man, opened a window that looked into the yard and desired me to come into her house. Here I stayed till about two o'clock in the morning, and then made my escape over the mountains to the Bottom-house. This woman is yet alive; but she is a new woman, and in our society. The next day the mob were not a little chagrined to find they had lost their prey, and had no other way to avenge themselves than to burn me in effigy.

Soon after I was pressed in spirit to visit Burton-upon-Trent once more. The mob soon gathered; and had it not been for a peculiar Providence in turning one of the head of them on my side, I believe I should have had that night the honour of martyrdom.

In weariness and painfulness, in hunger and thirst, in joy and sorrow, in weakness and trembling were my days now spent. And I have frequently thought, If God would excuse me from this hard task, how gladly should I embrace the life of a shoeblack or of a shepherd's boy! I was surrounded with death, and could seldom expect to survive another day, because of the fury of the people. And yet it was, 'Woe unto thee, if thou preach not the gospel.'

The summer following, 1755, the Conference was held at Leeds, where I was admitted as a travelling preacher. The next year I was sent to Canterbury. My little stock of money was nearly exhausted by the time I got to London;

and though it was rather too long a journey for a winter's day, I was under a necessity to push forward, not having money enough to keep me and my horse upon the road all night. It was about eight o'clock at night when I got within sight of the lamps in the city. Two men with large pistols then rushed out upon me from a narrow lane, and demanded my money. They took my watch and all the money I had in the world, which was two shillings and eightpence. (Indeed, sometimes, if a halfpenny would have purchased the three kingdoms, I had it not for weeks together.) I believe this robbery was permitted for good. It was at the time we expected an invasion from France, and the city of Canterbury was full of soldiers. They were two soldiers who robbed me, and this excited a curiosity in their comrades to hear the preacher who had been robbed, and it pleased God to convince many of them. About ten were in society before this, and when I came away they were increased to sixty.

Several of the following years I spent in Scotland; and I think this was, in general, the happiest period of my life. In 1763 brother Roberts and I came to Dundee. I preached in the evening, and he the next morning, when we parted. I came to Edinburgh, and he went to Aberdeen. Some time after I had a strong desire to give Dundee a fair trial. Accordingly I went there, and stayed three or four months. I continued preaching in the open air till November 10. And it was there God met with many poor sinners, and truly awakened them

to a sense of their misery; so that before I left the place there were near a hundred joined in our society. About this time Mr. Erskine published Mr. Hervey's Letters,[1] with a preface equally bitter. O the precious convictions those letters destroyed! They made me mourn in secret places. Mr. Erskine being much esteemed in the religious world, and recommending them through the whole kingdom, our enemies made their advantage of them. These made the late Lady Gardiner leave us, after expressing a thousand times, in my hearing, the great profit she received by hearing our preaching. Many were then brought to the birth, but by those letters their convictions were stifled. What a pity good men should help to destroy the real work of God in the hearts of men!

In 1765 I was appointed to labour in the Leeds Circuit. Here the Lord was pleased to try me, by the death of a most amiable wife and my only child. O how great a debtor to that grace which forbids our murmuring at the dispensations of Providence, though it allows us to sorrow, but not as men without hope!

In 1766 I laboured in the Birstall Circuit; in 1767, in Staffordshire; in 1768, in Bedfordshire; in 1769 and 1770, in Newcastle; in 1771, in Edinburgh and Glasgow. From hence I made a short visit to my old friends at Dundee; and, notwithstanding the many difficulties they had had to encounter, I found many of them serious

[1] John Erskine, 1721–1803 friend of Whitefield, published theological and controversial works. See Wesley's *Journal*, April 23, 1765.

and steady. In 1772 and 1773 I laboured in Staffordshire again; in 1774 and 1775, in Gloucestershire; in 1776 and 1777, in Macclesfield. There the Lord was pleased again to afflict me in a very tender part, by making a second breach in my family.

Our lives are ever in the power of death.

In 1778 I was appointed for Liverpool. I am now going on in my second year, among a loving, kind, good people, for whom I feel the greatest affection, and hope my weak labours are acceptable.

Thus, dear sir, I have given you a short account of my life; but fain I would do something for Him who has loved me and given Himself for me. My sentiments in religion are the same they ever were. I believe man by nature is sinful and helpless; that his only remedy is in Jesus Christ, who tasted death for every man; that the Holy Spirit works conversion in the soul, and a fitness for the kingdom of heaven, by transforming it into the image of the ever-blessed God. This conformity I most ardently long for; and hope, dear sir, you will entreat the Father of mercies for your affectionate son and servant in the gospel,

THOMAS HANBY.

LIVERPOOL, *November* 12, 1779.

Thomas Hanby was the fourth President of the Conference (at Bristol in 1794) and the first in the long array of Presidents who have died since Wesley's day.

Mr. Austin, of Brede, has [1909] a letter from

Thomas Hanby to James Oddie, dated Doncaster, January 9, 1788. After referring to some personal troubles he turns to the sacramental question. There is little hope of having the ordinances, and he almost fears that he will be driven from the old ship. Happily he lived to be its captain.

A letter from Thomas Hanby to James Oddie, dated Grantham, May 21, 1789, is given in *Proceedings of Wesley Hist. Soc.*, iv. 171. He had been ordained to administer the sacrament in Scotland, and had got into deep waters through giving it in England, 'especially to those who for conscience cannot go to church. Mr. Wesley has written and ordered me to lay it aside. I wrote and told him if I did I should sin, because I was persuaded it was my duty, and therefore I could not oblige him.'[1]

An account of Mr. Hanby's death appears in the *Methodist Magazine*, 1797, p. 187:

NOTTINGHAM, *January* 11, 1797.

DEAR SIR,

As the friends of our much esteemed brother and faithful minister of Christ, Mr. Hanby, will wish to see some account of his removal from our world to the regions of immortal glory, where the servants of Jesus rest from their labours, the following particulars will undoubtedly be acceptable to them, as well as to many of your readers.

On Christmas Day last Mr. Hanby expounded part of the second chapter of St. Luke's Gospel at six o'clock in the morning, in the chapel at Nottingham; in the forenoon he preached upon

[1] See also Tyerman's *Wesley*, iii. 574.

Isaiah ix. 6, 'His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor'; and in the evening, from 1 Tim. iii. 16, 'Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness.' Little did those who heard him think that this was the last time that he was to bear a public testimony for his blessed Master; yet so it proved. O, how necessary to be always ready! 'Blessed is that servant who when his Lord cometh shall be found watching.' He also met four or five classes the same day. I hope that the people to whom he spoke will not soon forget the instructions he then gave them. In the evening he was fatigued and not well, and next morning much worse.

On Monday forenoon he had a violent pain in his stomach, owing, as was supposed, to the gall-stones not passing (a disorder to which he was subject); he made use of some medicines which were prescribed for him when he was taken ill of the same complaint at the last London Conference. On Monday evening and Tuesday he thought himself something better. Dr. Marsden was sent for, who had been useful to him when ill of the same disorder before. The doctor prescribed several things for him; but, alas! all was in vain!

When I came home to see my family on Wednesday I found Mr. Hanby exceedingly ill indeed; but he did not complain of pain. He was much oppressed with stupor, and yet quite sensible. In the afternoon the Rev. Mr. Hopper, minister of the Baptist congregation in Nottingham, called to see him. Mr. Hopper said, 'I hope you find that Saviour whom you have preached

to others to be your support now ?' Mr. Hanby replied, 'I find my trust is in the Lord, but I do not enjoy much sensible comfort,' and complained of being oppressed with heaviness. The same kind friend called again on Thursday afternoon, and said, 'Mr. Hanby, I wish you every blessing which I should wish to enjoy myself if I was in your situation.'

On Wednesday evening, seeing his affectionate partner in distress, he said, 'God will be a Father to the fatherless, and a Husband to the widow'; and soon after, 'I have left my all with God. What should I do if I had my religion to seek now ?' Speaking of the grave, he said, 'There the weary are at rest.'

On Thursday in the forenoon he was much engaged in prayer; and we also were exercised in the same way in his behalf, chiefly that the Lord would spare His faithful servant a little longer among us, if this might be for His glory. I asked him several times if he found the Lord nearer to him as he grew weaker, and he always answered 'Yes.' He exhorted his daughter Jane to seek an interest in Christ, and the two younger children came and kissed their dying parent.

In the evening Dr. Taft called to see him, and said, 'My good sir, how are you ?' He answered, 'I am departing; but I have fought the good fight.' Being now exceeding weak, it was with great difficulty that he pronounced the last words. We saw, with the greatest concern, that his dissolution was hastening on very fast; and, deeply affected as we were, brother Lowe and I

spent some time in solemn prayer, that the Lord would accompany His dear servant through the valley of the shadow of death, that a convoy of angels might be sent to conduct him to the paradise of God, and that an abundant entrance might be administered to him into the peaceful regions of everlasting day. O what a solemn season of love was this! The power of the Highest overshadowed us, and the glory of God filled the place. We all found ourselves brought near the gates of heaven!

A few moments after we arose from our knees, and were watching to see this blessed man draw his last breath; he quietly, without a sigh or groan, fell asleep. Thus the benevolent and meek Thomas Hanby left this vale of tears, on Thursday, a little after eight o'clock in the evening, December 29, 1796, aged sixty-three years.

His body was committed to the ground on January 2, in the chapel, attended by a crowded assembly. Had the men of the world seen all the tears that were shed for this man of God, they might have said with great propriety, 'Behold how they loved him.' The good Lord sanctify his removal to us all!

I remain yours affectionately,
T. Bartholomew.

John Pawson also wrote:

I have known Mr. Hanby well for near forty years, and have been particularly intimate with him for the last twelve years; therefore I can testify, from my own knowledge, that he was a

man of a meek and quiet spirit. He bore the burden and the heat of the day, and patiently endured all the persecution, reproach, and contempt that an ignorant world could cast upon him. His natural temper was remarkably mild. I believe hardly any one ever saw him moved with anything like anger, or heard a rash or unguarded word drop from his lips. Yet, notwithstanding his easy and obliging disposition, where the cause of God and of a good conscience were concerned, he was firm as a rock. During the forty-three years that he travelled and preached the gospel I believe no one can say that there was a blot upon his character, or even heard any complaint against him, unless it was for being too condescending and good-natured in matters of discipline, or too zealous in introducing the sacrament among us.

He certainly was both an acceptable and a very useful preacher, and universally beloved by the people. When he first visited Scotland the Lord greatly blessed his labours, particularly at Dundee. For a considerable time before he went to that place the inhabitants had been alarmed by an uncommon bright shining light, which appeared every night on a piece of ground near the town. Mr. Hanby, without any previous knowledge of that circumstance, happened to fix his pulpit upon the very spot where the light had been seen, which drew the attention of the inhabitants, and greatly increased his congregations.

Mr. Hanby was, in his day, a burning and a shining light; but he is now no longer an inhabitant of our vale of tears! Indeed, the first

generation of Methodists, both people and preachers, are almost all gone to their eternal rest. Very few are left behind. Forgive me, brethren, if on this occasion I drop a tear, and in the fullness of my heart pray that a double portion of that Spirit which influenced the first Methodist preachers may rest upon you who are likely to be their successors. Permit one who most sincerely loves you, but who will shortly follow Mr. Hanby, to entreat you, by the tender mercies of God, and by the love you bear to His blessed cause, to labour with all your might in maintaining the life and power of godliness, both in your own souls and those who hear you. Promote old genuine Methodism, which stands in the renewal of the soul in righteousness and true holiness. Remember, brethren, that the whole weight of the cause of God will very soon rest upon your shoulders; and seriously consider how much will then depend upon your walking closely with God, upon that state of mind in which you live in His sight and labour in His vineyard. How happy will it be for you, and how well for the people, if you daily experience, and upon good ground can say, with the holy apostle, 'I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life I now live in the body, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me!' Many eyes are upon you, and you have still numerous enemies to contend with (for notwithstanding outward persecution is in a great measure ceased, so that your opponents are not so furious as they once were, yet they

are not less subtle and dangerous), therefore you have still need of the whole armour of God, that through His strength you may conquer all that oppose you.

In another letter Mr. Pawson gives further particulars:

LONDON, *February* 10, 1797.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

The dying sayings of those who have long adorned the gospel of Christ by a holy life and conversation, and more especially when they have faithfully preached that gospel to mankind, are highly esteemed by the children of God of all denominations. This consideration has induced me to add some further particulars respecting our much-lamented friend Mr. Hanby.

Being earnestly pressed by our friends at Nottingham to go over and preach a sermon on that mournful occasion, I very reluctantly took a journey to that house of sorrow. My mind, indeed, was much afflicted for the death of my friend—for which reason, as well as for others, I judged myself to be a very improper person to undertake such a work; but I yielded to the importunity of the people, being glad to find that they entertained a sincere regard for him who had faithfully laboured among them. By so doing I had an opportunity to speak in the name of the Lord to crowded congregations, to drop a tear over the grave of my dear friend, and I also learned the following particulars concerning him:

On the Tuesday after Mr. Hanby was taken ill he desired his eldest daughter to read to him the 16th chapter of St. John's Gospel. It is well known that this and the chapters connected therewith are peculiarly affecting, as they contain the last solemn discourse which our Lord delivered while upon earth, as well as His last prayer with His disciples. Many dying Christians have desired these chapters to be read to them.

On Wednesday evening a friend said, 'I hope you find that the Lord is good to you.' He replied, 'The Lord is my rock; upon what He hath done and suffered is all my dependence; His precious death and intercession is all my hope.' At another time he said, 'The Lord is better and better to me; He has taken away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.' Sensibly feeling his own weakness, he said, 'Helpless, poor, and needy, but—"Whosoever cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out"'; and added, 'Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they shall comfort me. I will fear no evil.' Being in extreme pain, he said, 'This is great work.' One who was present asked, 'What is great work?' He replied, 'Dying work is great work.'

On Thursday afternoon, when very near death, he said, '"I am the resurrection and the life," saith the Lord: "whosoever believeth in Me, though he was dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." Believe ye this?' Mrs. Hanby, seeing, with the deepest sorrow, the dissolution

of her best friend hastening on apace, said, 'Can you speak to me?' He replied, 'Yes, I can tell you to cast your care upon the Lord, for He careth for you: He will be a Father to the fatherless, and a Husband to the widow.'

Although his pain was very acute, yet his understanding was quite clear to the last; so that he could readily quote the above remarkably pertinent passages of that blessed Word of God which he had so greatly delighted in for many years, and no doubt found it spirit and life to his soul.

May we follow him as he followed Christ, that in due time we also may depart in peace, our eyes having seen the salvation of God.

So prays your affectionate friend,

J. Pawson.

His Obituary in the *Minutes of Conference*, 1797, says: 'He was the oldest travelling preacher in the Methodist Connexion, having regularly travelled forty-four years. His temper was remarkably mild and gentle. His qualifications for the ministry were very great, and his character unexceptionable. His praise is in our societies, and his memory will long be precious to thousands. Though the affliction which ended in his death was of some continuance, yet he was taken rather suddenly at last, as he preached till within a few days of his removal. He died in the triumph of faith, rejoicing in the God of his salvation.'

ALEXANDER MATHER[1]

Letter to the Rev. John Wesley

REV. SIR,

I was born at Brechin, in North Britain, in February, 1733, of reputable parents, who made it their business to bring me up in the fear of God. They instructed me early in the principles of religion, and took particular care to keep me from evil company; so that, when I grew up, I was an utter stranger to the vices common among men. And I took pleasure in reading good books, and learning our Catechisms by heart. When I was at the Latin school, it was the custom of our master every Lord's Day, after the evening service, to hear what we could remember of the sermons, and to pray with us. Under one of his prayers (when I was about ten years old) I was struck with strong convictions; and these never quite left me, but I always retained a desire to be a Christian.

Soon after this, out of a childish frolic, I went away with a party of the rebels. But I knew not what I did. I hereby exposed myself to many hardships and dangers. But the Lord delivered me out of all. Many mighty ones

[1] *The Arminian Magazine*, 1780, with portrait.

fell on Culloden Heath, and in the way to Inverness, and indeed on every side; yet I was mercifully preserved. But when I came near my father's house, there was no entrance for me; and I knew not where to go, till my mother resolved to take me to a relation of hers, near Perth.

We had a large river to cross, which was much swelled by the late rains. We were just got into the boat, when a gentleman on horseback came and begged us to stay and take him in, which we accordingly did. He seemed much fatigued. My mother desired me to hold his horse, which I did, twisting the bridle round my hand. When we were about the middle of the river, the horse took fright, and leaped out of the boat, taking me and the oars and both the boatmen with him; so that none were left in the boat but my mother and the gentleman, without any means of helping themselves. The horse swam to the opposite shore, dragging me with him; then turned back, and swam to the shore we had left. He then jumped out, pulling me just above the water; but I there lost my hold, and fell back into the river. It carried me down, rolling me over and over, till it brought me to the side of the boat, which was strangely got to the same shore. They catched hold of me, and pulled me in.

Here I cannot but remark several providential incidents: (1) That both the boatmen should get safe to that side of the water. (2) Yet when they were there they should be able to get the boat, with my mother and the gentleman

safe in it. (3) Yet the horse did not leave me on the opposite side, where to all appearance I must have perished. (4) Yet, notwithstanding the impetuosity of the stream, the horse should reach the land above the boat. Had it been below, I had probably been lost. I admire above all the exact timing of every circumstance! Had I been brought to the same side first, I could have had no help; had the boatmen reached the opposite side, they in the boat could have had none. And had any of us been carried but a little lower, we must inevitably have been swallowed up in a whirlpool.

After having thrown up much water, I was so far recovered as to be able to take boat again. And having got safe over, we travelled twelve Scotch miles (eighteen English) before night. But we could not travel without much danger, as the country was full of parties, both horse and foot, who abused all the strangers they met with, and often took them prisoners. When we came near a town we inquired of one we met where we could have a quiet lodging. She said she could recommend us to no inn, for they would inform the soldiers of us, who were very rude to all strangers, especially to women; but if we would put up with the house of a poor man, she knew one that she thought would receive us. So she conducted us to a little cottage, where we found the man engaged in family worship. When it was ended he looked upon my mother, and said, 'Good wife, I have no place fit to entertain you, who appear to have a good home somewhere. Neither can I

protect you if the soldiers hear you are in my house. But if you please to sit by the fire, with a little straw for the lad to lie on, you are welcome.' They then gave us something to eat and drink, which we received with thankfulness to God. The good woman then laid me down on the straw, and sat by my mother till the morning; when, having been commended to God in prayer by our host, we went on our journey.

My mother's brother was a considerable farmer in the Carse of Gowry, near Perth. Thither we got before sunset, and were kindly received, till my mother told me her design of leaving me there. But his wife opposed it much, fearing lest, if it was discovered, they should be ruined for harbouring me. However, my uncle, seeing the distress my mother was in, overruled her, and said I should stay. And the next morning he sent a servant with my mother, who saw her safe home.

I stayed the Sunday at my uncle's. But on Monday morning, before sunrise, he called me (his wife having prevailed), and told me, 'You must go hence.' So I set off with one to guide me across the mountains. He then left me to find my way as I could, to a place and a person I had never heard of before; but I had a line to the man. Providence brought me to the place; but the man was not at home. However, he came the next day, and received me kindly. Here I stayed till about midsummer, and then removed to a distant relation's, where I stayed till November. It was then judged

I might go home safely; but when I came my father would not let me come into his house. Nay, he went and made information against me to the commanding officer; and I should have been sent to prison had not a gentleman of the town interfered for me, and procured leave for me to lodge at my father's house. In the morning a file of musqueteers came to take me into custody, and brought me to the officer. After asking many questions, he told me, 'You may go home.' But when I came to the door, the soldiers, not knowing his order, were going to carry me to prison, till he looked out of the window, and bade them let me go. However, my father would not put me to school any more, but kept me to his business, that of baking.

I continued with my father till the beginning of May, 1751; when, being well acquainted with my business, I determined to go abroad. I set out with another young man, who was engaged in Perth. Here a place was provided for me in a pious family, where I remained till after Christmas. Two persons then came from London, with one of whom I contracted an intimate acquaintance. One Lord's Day she asked me to go with her to the Episcopal meeting. It affected me much, and from that time I attended it whenever I could. And I cannot but say it was of great use to my soul, and has proved so ever since.

About this time I formed a purpose of going to London; and having taken leave of my relations, we set sail from Montrose about the middle of June, 1752. When I came to London

I knew no one there; but the kind hand of God was over me. I found a brother of my father's, who, being of the same trade, took me to work with him till he procured me a place in a serious family at Billingsgate. But as I was a foreigner, my master was summoned to Guildhall, and obliged to put me away. In a little time I got me another place, near Whitechapel Bars. And as I was strong and active, my master persuaded me to engage for a year certain. Afterwards he did not use me well: till one day, being in a passion, he ordered me instantly to quit his house, which I immediately did.

In the year 1753 my present wife, who was born near where I was, and had lived several years with my parents in my infancy, heard I was in London, and resolved to see me. We had not seen one another for many years, and were both glad of the meeting; and as I was then out of place, we had opportunity of seeing each other frequently. On February 14 we were married. I had then forgot the resolutions I had often made of living wholly to God whenever I should marry; but He soon brought them back to my remembrance, by laying affliction upon my wife. I now began to be in good earnest for salvation. I bought up all opportunities for prayer. I resolved to break through all opposition, and to serve God with all my heart.

But it still lay heavy upon my mind that I had not performed my vow of praying with my wife. And my convictions increased day by day

till my appetite was gone and my sleep departed from me; my bones were filled as with a sore disease, and my tears were my meat day and night. I now broke through, and prayed with my wife; and we never after left the practice. It was not long after this that she knew God to be a pardoning God. And all that summer we continued praying and striving together, and steadily walking in all the ordinances of God.

After living at Hampstead some time I removed to a place in St. Katherine's. While I was here I was one day going hastily along the street, and a loaded cart stood in it, which nearly filled it up. However, I went on, thinking I could get by; but just as I was going by, it moved, caught my basket, crushed me up against the wall, and dragged me along till we came against a shop-window, which gave way, and released me. Every one that saw it supposed I should be crushed to death, or at least that my arms and legs would be broken. But I received no hurt at all, besides a little bruise on the back of my hand.

In September, 1753, I was hired to Mr. Marriott.[1] Our meeting was not expected on either side. He had been inquiring the character of another, which he did not approve of, and I was inquiring for a master when he came and asked me if I was out of place. I answered, 'Yes.' He asked if I would keep good hours; which I promised to do. So we agreed, and I entered upon his service. Here I found what I

[1] Thomas Marriott, a baker in Norton Folgate, an early member at the Foundery. His wife was one of the first members there. See *Wesley's Chapel and Wesley's House.*

had long desired, a family wherein was the worship of God. This stirred me up to be more earnest in seeking Him; to be exact in praying by myself every morning, and with my wife every afternoon. And we continued seeking Him with our whole heart, and shunning whatever we thought offensive to Him. We used, likewise, every means of grace. I have sometimes gone to my knees when I was going to bed, and have continued in that position till two o'clock, when I was called to go to work.

My wife had some time since found a degree of peace with God. But I could find no peace, nor could I tell what hindered, unless it were the baking of pans, as they called it, on Sundays. I would gladly have refrained from this, but then I must have left my place, and I had no hope of finding another place which would not have been liable to the same inconvenience. However, I resolved, as soon as Christmas was over, to give up my place at all events. Meantime my flesh consumed away, like as a moth fretting a garment. And my bones were ready to start through my skin; for I had no rest day or night. The following Sunday my wife and I ventured for the first time to the holy communion, and I found some comfort; but the sense of my profaning the Sabbath soon took it away. I now resolved to delay no longer than the next day, being willing to suffer rather than to sin. Accordingly on Monday morning, as soon as my master came downstairs, I gave him warning. He did not then speak one word; but soon after he came into the shop, and asked me if I had

got another place. I answered, 'No.' He said, 'Why, then, would you leave this?' I answered, 'Because I dare not commit sin by breaking the Sabbath, as I have done.' He used many arguments with me, but in vain. I told him, 'I must abide by the word of God, whatever be the consequence; but I will not go away till you suit yourself with another man.'

God now gave me much confidence, and I found much power to pray that if it was not His will we should part, He would incline my master to give it up. And the same day he went, with a neighbouring baker, to all of the trade in Shoreditch and Bishopsgate Without, proposing that they should all enter into an agreement to give it up at once. All but two agreed. He then advertised for a meeting of master-bakers upon the subject; but nothing could be concluded. Afterwards, I supposed, he asked the advice of our brethren at the Foundery. After he had taken all these steps, more than I could reasonably expect, he told me, 'I have done all I can, and now I hope you will be content.' I sincerely thanked him for what he had done, but told him I could not stay any longer than till he had suited himself. But I continued in prayer. And on Sunday evening, after family worship, he stopped me, and said, 'I have done to-day what will please you: I have stayed at home and told all my customers I will no more bake on a Sunday.' I told him, 'If you have done this out of conscience toward God, be assured it will end well.' And so it did. That very year his trade considerably increased. And he had a large augmentation of

his fortune, so that he was enabled to relieve many that were in want, and also to lay up abundance for his children. May they herein tread in their father's steps!

He then asked me how I came to scruple baking on Sundays. And I told him simply how God had dealt with my soul. And I believe it was then he first felt that affection for me which continued to his dying day. (From that time both he and my good mistress were particularly kind to me and mine; and when, some years after, my station in London placed me in some sense over them, there were none in the society that more fully submitted to every branch of discipline.) It was then he asked me to go with him to the Foundery, which I did at five the next morning. When I came back I told my wife where I had been. It grieved her much, as she believed all the idle reports she had heard; many of which she rehearsed, and added, 'Now our peace is broken for ever.' This stirred me up to be more earnest in prayer, but did not prevent my going every morning. On Sunday she was persuaded to go with me, though much afraid of my being drawn into some wrong way. John Nelson[1] preached an alarming discourse, which I hoped would affect her much. But, on the contrary, she was much disgusted, saying, 'He has shown me the way to hell, and not the way to get out of it. But I thank God He has shown me that Jesus Christ is the way, and has brought me out of it too.' However, she went again the next

[1] The Yorkshire stonemason who became one of Wesley's noblest preachers.

Sunday. Mr. Charles Wesley[1] then preached, and described the whole process of the work of God in the soul. She followed him step by step, till he came to the abiding witness of adoption, and here he left her behind. She was now both pleased and profited, and we now went on hand-in-hand in the ways of God. But still I did not find the Spirit of adoption, though I sought it diligently, continuing instant in prayer, and attending the word every morning and evening. Indeed, this was not without difficulty; for I had no time for either but what I took from my sleep, which should have been from six to ten in the evening, and from half-past four to six in the morning. I now slept little and ate little, and the grief of my soul drank up my spirits. But yet I could not believe, though I continued in prayer and supplication day and night, seeking God in sincerity of heart, and carefully departing from evil.

About this time my wife and I were permitted to stay at the meeting of one of the classes. I was much pleased and refreshed; but she said, 'They had all agreed what to say, in order to catch us.' Such is the folly of prejudice! It was soon after this that you returned from the Bristol Hot Wells (being just recovered from your consumption), namely, on Easter Eve, 1754. The next day you preached at West Street, April 14: it was the first time I ever saw or heard you.[2] Under that

[1] Charles Wesley's journal for this time is lost.

[2] Wesley reached the Foundery on April 2, and two days later says, 'I retired to Paddington. Here I spent some weeks in writing; only going to town on Saturday evenings, and leaving it again on Monday morning.'—*Journal.*

sermon God set my heart at liberty, removing my sins from me as far as the east is from the west—which the very change of my countenance testified before my tongue could utter it. I had no great transport of joy; but my load was gone, and I could praise God from the ground of my heart, all my sorrow, and fear, and anguish of spirit being changed into a solid peace.

But on Monday, in the afternoon, as I was going alone I began to think, 'You fancy your sins are forgiven, but you are deceived.' I had but a little time given way to these thoughts before I was quite miserable. And when I got home my wife immediately asked, 'What is the matter with you?' I said, 'Matter enough: I have deceived my own soul. I wish I had my sorrow again.' She strongly urged me not to reason, but believe; to look unto Jesus, as giving Himself for me. I was encouraged. I soon recovered my peace, which, by the mercy of God, I have not lost since. Soon after we both joined the society, and met in brother Goode's class: and this, among all the means of grace, was peculiarly useful to my soul.

About this time my elder brother, who used the sea, after being wrecked got his passage to London. He was easily convinced of sin, and soon after converted to God. So being all of one heart and one mind, we rejoiced in God all the day long. But it was not long before I had strong impressions upon my mind that God had called me to preach. I mentioned this in my band, after I had often sought God by fasting and prayer.

We set apart some days for the same exercises. Afterwards they advised me to mention it to you. You said, 'This is a common temptation among young men. Several have mentioned it to me. But the next thing I hear of them is that they are married, or upon the point of it.' I said, 'Sir, I am married already.' You said, 'Care not for it; but seek God by fasting and prayer.' I answered, 'This I have done.' You strongly recommended patience and perseverance therein; and said you doubted not but God would soon make the way plain before my face.

Soon after you appointed me to be the leader of a band, and in a little time of a class; and God blessed me in both. But this did not at all alter my conviction that I must preach; nay, it grew stronger and stronger, till, having no rest day or night, I was constrained to come to you again and tell you just what I felt. You told me, 'To be a Methodist preacher is not the way to ease, honour, pleasure, or profit. It is a life of much labour and reproach. They often fare hard, often are in want. They are liable to be stoned, beaten, and abused in various manners. Consider this before you engage in so uncomfortable a way of life.' I replied, I had no desire to engage therein unless it was the call of God, and I did not regard what I suffered in doing the will of God. You said, 'You may then make a trial to-morrow morning at Snowsfields Chapel.' I did so. The Monday following you appointed me for Wapping Chapel, and for the Foundery on Tuesday morning. It was near ten at night when I received the message. I soon went to work,

but was engaged in meditation and prayer for assistance all the time I was making my dough. As soon as I had done (the rest of the family being in bed), I went to prayer, in which I found great liberty. I then read in my Bible to find a text, and continued reading and praying till two o'clock. It was then time to call my fellow servant, and we went to work together, being employed, as usual, till near four, in preparing the bread for the oven. All this time I was still in meditation and prayer, but could not fix upon a text. Soon after four he went to bed again, and I went to prayer, till a quarter before five, when I went to the Foundery, but with much fear and trembling; and when I took up the Hymn-Book I was so faint that I could not speak so as to be understood. The people therefore could not sing; and as I was no singer, we were all at a stand. This did not a little increase my agitation, which was so great that I could not keep one of my joints from shaking. However, in a while I went on; and after prayer, opened the Bible on those words, 'Ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God with your body and spirit, which are God's.' I now left the determination of this weighty affair with you, desiring that if you judged I was called of God to preach you would employ me (as my business would permit) just when and where you pleased.

In a little time I was more employed than my strength would well allow. I had no time for preaching but what I took from my sleep, so that I had frequently not eight hours of sleep in a week. This, with hard labour, constant

abstem ousness, and frequent fasting, brought me so low that in a little more than two years I was hardly able to follow my business. My master was often afraid I should kill myself, and perhaps his fear was not groundless. I have frequently put off my shirts as wet with sweat as if they had been dipped in water. After hastening to finish my business abroad, I have come home all on a sweat in the evening, changed my clothes, and run to preach at one or another chapel; then walked or run back, changed my clothes, and gone to work at ten, wrought hard all night, and preached at five the next morning. I ran back to draw the bread at a quarter or half an hour past six; wrought hard in the bake-house till eight; then hurried about with the bread till the afternoon, and perhaps at night set off again.

It is true I need not have continued so long in this way. For you proposed my going to Ireland with you, as a travelling preacher, in the beginning of March, 1756. I cheerfully agreed thereto, as you promised my wife should be provided for in my absence. This I mentioned to one of my friends, who said, 'No doubt he intends it, but when he is gone the stewards will do as they please'; adding, 'How can you labour in Ireland, while your wife is starving here?' I thought, however, I will talk with the stewards myself. I did so; and Mr. Brolts and Hobbins asked, 'What will be sufficient for your wife?' I answered, 'Four shillings a week.' But this they were unwilling to allow. So I remained at my business, till another pointed

out, which I followed till August, 1757. It was then agreed that I should travel, and that my wife should have that fixed allowance. This was the beginning of that settlement for preachers' wives which (with the addition of forty shillings a year) continues to this day.

I was appointed for Epworth Circuit in Lincolnshire, which then included the Gainsborough, Grimsby, and Sheffield Circuits. I left London, August 15, 1757, to walk to Epworth, about a hundred and fifty miles. My fellow labourers were Thomas Hanby, Thomas Tobias, and afterwards Thomas Lee. It pleased God to give me much of His presence in my own soul, and to let me see some fruit of my labour. This supported me under the various exercises I met with. The first of these was at Rotherham, where John Thorpe, one of our local preachers, had just separated from us. He declared open war against us, particularly opposing what he called 'my perfection.' Yet it pleased God to raise up many witnesses of it—many that loved Him with all their hearts, several of whom are burning and shining lights, and several removed into Abraham's bosom. Yea, it was observed that some of his own hearers, even while he was preaching against salvation from sin, were fully convinced of the necessity of it, and indeed never rested more till they were happy witnesses of it.

In autumn I was desired to go to Boston. I did so, and preached in a field on a Sunday evening, with tolerable quietness. The next time I went Mr. Alwood and I judged it would

be best to be in the market-place. We began singing, when suddenly a large mob appeared, with a drum beating before them; meantime a great number of squibs were thrown among the people. Finding it was impossible to be heard, we purposed going to a friend's about a mile from the town. The moment we turned our backs the dirt and stones flew like hail on every side. On the bridge a man stopped us; but we broke from him, and went on, with the mob at our heels, throwing all that came to hand. Their number continually increasing, we thought it would be most advisable to face them and try to get back to the town, where we had left our horses. My two companions immediately leaped over a wide ditch, which divided the field. But before I could follow them one of the mob, coming behind me, struck up my heels and gave me a violent fall. When I got up my friends were out of sight, and the mob surrounded me on every side. I knew not which way to go, neither indeed how to go at all, being exceeding weak and spent, both with the fall and the many blows I had received. Being a little recovered, I tried to go through them, to a foot-bridge that was over the ditch. They forbore throwing till I drew near the bridge, and then all cried out, 'Ditch him, ditch him!' And just on the side of the ditch one struck up my heels again. Yet he stood by me, and let me rise up and walk quietly over the bridge. There I was in the middle of the mob, and had a large field to go through, parted from the road by high rails, which had a broad ditch on either side. When I came to

the rails I knew not how to get over, my breath being almost spent; and, if I could, I saw no likelihood of escaping the being thrown into the ditch. However, they let me crawl over, without much hurt. But as soon as I was on the road the same person who stopped us on the bridge collared me, to drag me to the horse-pond, while the rest plastered me over afresh with dirt. But just as we came to the pond a gentleman called out to him that held me, 'Let the man go.' He immediately let go his hold, and I passed by the pond.

I had still to walk through the whole town, my horse being at the far end of it. When I came into the street they got the dirt out of the kennels, and threw it in my face. As no door was open to take me in, I was obliged now and then to turn and face them (otherwise they seldom looked me in the face), in order to get breath. When I came into the market-place there was a general shout for the glorious victory. Before I got to the inn I was just ready to lie down, when one struck me violently, in order to strike up my heels. But I kept my feet, I know not how; which I looked upon as a great mercy, as such a fall upon the stones might have done me much hurt. At the same time one threw a stone, which struck me on the temple. I then concluded I must die in their hands. But, by the mercy of God, I was strangely brought through all the multitude to the inn where I had alighted. Being sat down, my first thought was, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' Indeed my mind (glory be to God!) was kept

through the whole in perfect peace. By this time some of my friends, who had followed at a distance, were come in, and were washing my wound; when the mob came to the door, threatening what they would do to the house if the landlord did not turn me out. He came in and said, 'I cannot keep you here, for the mob will pull my house down.' I told him, 'Sir, I am in your house, but while I use it as an inn it is mine. Turn me out at your peril. If you fear your house, apply to a magistrate for protection.' He went to his landlord, who was a magistrate, and ordered him to take down the names of the chief rioters. After a while I mounted my horse in the yard, and then, the gates being open, rode through a shower of stones, and came safe to our friend's house. But I was so bruised, almost from head to foot, that when I was cold I could hardly stir. And it was a full year before I quite recovered the hurts which I then received.

The next day I went back with a friend to the town. I soon found three of the rioters, to whom I could swear, but the rest were absconded. Hearing the justices were in the hall, we went thither without delay; and telling the clerk we had business with the court, we were speedily introduced. The chairman, after we had made our complaint, roughly said, 'You are the aggressor. And now you have the impudence to come to us, requiring justice against others!' I answered, 'I am here. If I have broken any law, inflict the penalty upon me. But in the meantime I require you, in His Majesty's name,

to do justice upon these rioters.' After more threats I was desired to call upon one of them at his own house, when the court was over. I did so, and he behaved exceedingly well, sending his sergeant for two of the rioters, one of whom brought his master to speak for him; but the justice told him plainly, 'Either make it up with Mr. Mather, or I will send you to jail directly.' They both then asked pardon, promised good behaviour for the future, paid the expenses, and were dismissed. The third fled; but, a warrant being given, he was apprehended, but upon the same terms he was released.

I cannot but remark another thing which happened this year. Nottingham had at this time no regular preaching. I had a strong desire to make a trial there, and came thither in the afternoon. At Matthew Bagshaw's I found John Johnson, of York, who said, 'I am glad you are come; for here is a poor man who is to die to-morrow, whose behaviour is terrifying: he curses, swears, and threatens death to all that have given evidence against him, the jailer in particular. He will see no clergyman, but says he resolves to be a devil, that he may revenge himself. The minister has given me free leave to visit him. I went this morning; but he said, "Give yourself no trouble about me. By this time to-morrow I shall be a devil, and then I will come and tear that villain in pieces."' We immediately went to prayer, and vehemently wrestled with God on his behalf. After prayer we went to him, and at first sight observed an entire change in his behaviour. We inquired when this sudden

change began, and found it was just while we were at prayer. But we had little opportunity of speaking to him, the minister (for whom he had sent) being just come: I could only say, as he passed by me heavily ironed, 'Jesus Christ is both able and willing to strike off the heavier fetters of sin from your soul.' He looked earnestly, but said nothing. We applied again to the throne of grace before and after the preaching, and likewise great part of the night. We went early in the morning, and he was brought to us in the parlour. We talked and prayed with him some time. After rising from prayer he said to the jailer, 'I now forgive and love you, and I hope and pray that you will forgive me.' This was quickly noised about the town, which filled the yard with spectators, who crowded about the windows, which gave us an opportunity of speaking to them also. He now acknowledged the justice of his sentence, and was resigned to it, having a strong hope of finding mercy. We attended him into the yard, when his irons were knocked off, amidst a vast crowd, to whom we spake much on the occasion. Thence we accompanied him to the church, and afterwards to the cart, which stood at the gate, ready to receive him. But as he desired to walk between us, the sheriff gave him leave, and took much pains to keep off the crowd. At the end of the town we sang part of that hymn,

> O for a thousand tongues to sing
> My great Redeemer's praise!

During the first three verses he seemed lifted up;

but when we came to those words in the fourth verse,

> His blood can make the foulest clean,
> His blood availed for *me*,

he rejoiced with joy unspeakable. When we came to the place of execution the minister prayed, and went away. The sheriff allowed us to pray with him again; and we committed his soul to God, in cheerful hope of meeting him again in Abraham's bosom.

In the year 1758, being stationed in Newcastle Circuit (which then reached as far as Musselborough), I made a visit to Brechin, in my way to which I was seized with the bloody flux. As soon as I got home I took my room. I was not able to come downstairs for a month. My wife was quite a stranger at Newcastle, but I could leave her and all things to God. I spoke freely to all who came to see me, not letting any escape out of my hands. Mr. Blair, the minister, came frequently; and his son, a physician, visited me several times a day. It was now I discharged the clotted blood which had lain in me ever since the riot at Boston. Yet I did not recover till I prevailed on my mother to give me a large quantity of toast-and-water. The disorder was then presently stopped, and in a day or two I went downstairs.

The Sunday following the sacrament was to be administered. I sent a line to Mr. Blair, and desired to be admitted to it, if it would not offend any of his parishioners. He immediately sent me a token, saying, 'I will admit you if

they are all offended.' I went on Sunday, the first day I was abroad. The service lasted from nine in the morning to five in the evening, but I received no hurt. The next morning I breakfasted at Mr. Blair's, with the minister that assisted at the sacrament. They were sensible, candid men. Mr. Blair desired me to give them an account of the work of God in England. But when I mentioned the greatness of the work, and the fewness of the labourers, he said, 'Among so great a number of people there must be many men of learning: why does not Mr. Wesley send them out?' This led me to mention the prerequisites of a Methodist preacher; namely, (1) A knowledge of God, as his God, as having pardoned all his sins. (2) A life and conversation suitable thereto. (3) A clear conviction that he was called of God to the work; otherwise he could not bear the crosses attending it. (4) Some fruit of his labour, in convincing and converting of sinners. Mr. Blair broke out, 'If these are the prerequisites of a Methodist preacher, they must not come here for them.' I preached twice before I left Brechin, to a vast concourse of people, and afterwards at Montrose; but I know not that it had any lasting effect, unless the removal of prejudice.

In 1759 I was stationed in York Circuit, which then included Yarm,[1] Scarborough, and Hull Circuits. In this year the work at Whitby

[1] Wesley visited Hutton-Rudby on June 20, 1761. 'After sermon the society alone filled the new preaching-house, so mightily has the work of God prevailed since Alexander Mather laboured here.'

began, and we had a great outpouring of the Spirit in many places. The next year I was in Staffordshire, where it pleased God to work in a very eminent manner; at Darlaston in particular, where there was a small but steady society of long standing. Several of these had borne much persecution, and took joyfully the spoiling of their goods. Ever since their behaviour has been unblameable, and yet none of them could say 'I know that my Redeemer liveth.' Some of these coming over to the prayer-meetings at Wednesbury, and hearing (what they thought they had never heard before) that they were to believe now—that they might come to Christ now, without any other qualification than a sense of their own sinfulness and helplessness—they were utterly astonished, and began to be amazed at their slowness of heart. Presently a prayer-meeting was set up at Darlaston, and in a little time many souls were set at liberty. The oldest stood out longest. After all they had done and suffered they found it hard to come as having done nothing. And when they were urged to it in a class or prayer-meeting, they were ready to gnash with their teeth. But whether they would hear or forbear, God continued to add more and more souls to His genuine gospel. Nothing stood before it. Many of the servants and children of these old professors cried out, 'What must I do to be saved?' Being pointed to the Lamb of God, they believed, and rejoiced in God their Saviour, to the utter astonishment of their unbelieving masters and parents. In one night it was common

to see five or six (and sometimes more) praising God for His pardoning mercy. And not a few in Birmingham, Dudley, and Wolverhampton, as well as in Wednesbury and Darlaston, clearly testified that the blood of Jesus Christ had cleansed them from all sin.

Meantime the societies increased greatly. In Darlaston we purchased ground, and built a preaching-house, and in Birmingham we hired a large building. Satan was alarmed at this, and stirred up outward persecution, both at Birmingham and Wolverhampton. But it did us no hurt. Our brethren went on, not counting their lives dear unto themselves. He then made the minds of some of the old Methodists evil affected towards their brethren. They began to speak much evil, particularly in their classes, of them and of this new doctrine. And any defect in these new converts (as they called them) was magnified to the utmost, and then brought as an undeniable proof that the whole matter was wrong. These were earnestly supported by Mr. J——s, formerly an itinerant, now a local preacher. To him they sent every tale that malice could invent, either against the work or the instruments employed therein—my wife in particular, whom, indeed, God had been pleased to make eminently useful. This embarrassed me a little; however, we went on, and the work did not suffer much, till about the time of the Conference, when some of the preachers, going through the circuit, and hearing only one side (though they might have heard both, as I was present), both privately encouraged the opposition and in their public

discourses, dividing the people into the new and old believers, used many unkind expressions to encourage the old and discourage the new believers, as they called them. This went hard with one that was not an old preacher, this being but the fourth year of my preaching and the first of my acting as an assistant. However, by the grace of God, far less hurt was done than might reasonably have been expected.

As I wrote to you the most minute circumstances of the work, and you were there in the very height of it, you judged it best to place me in the circuit another year. But I made a false step in the beginning of it. Longing for peace, and preferring the judgement of other men to my own, I agreed that my wife should not hold any more prayer-meetings. Immediately the work began to decay, both as to its swiftness and extensiveness. And though I continued to insist as strongly as ever upon the same points, yet there was not the same effect, for want of seconding by prayer-meetings the blow which was given in preaching. Mr. Westell laboured with me this year. We constantly attended Stroud and Painswick. At both places there was a large increase; as also in several other parts of the circuit, which then included Coventry and Shrewsbury.

After having been married near ten years I had this year a son. May he prove a blessing to many, and a comfort to his parents! In May and June you desired me to visit Wales and regulate the societies there. They were all then

supplied by Mr. Taylor, who was exceedingly useful among them. But the people in general were difficult to get, and more so to keep, in society. In many places, however, they joined together, and not a few of them remain to this day.

In 1763 God revived His work in the Staffordshire Circuit, especially at Birmingham—notwithstanding the disturbance which we constantly had during the preaching, and the danger of being murdered by the mob when we came out of the house. No magistrate could quell the rioters—or rather, I should say, none would. For it is certain any magistrate has power to preserve the peace if he will. But at length Mr. Wortly Birch took them in hand: he laid some of the rioters in the dungeon, and left them there a night or two to cool. He fined the rest according to law; obliged them to pay the money down, and gave it to the poor. By this means their stout spirits were humbled, and we have had peace ever since. This year a preaching-house was built at Stroud, and another at Wolverhampton. But this was not long-lived, for soon after the mob assembled and pulled it down to the ground.

They had reigned here for a long time, insomuch that it was difficult for a Methodist to pass the streets. And now one could hardly appear in them but at the hazard of his life. The rioters had broken most of their windows, and swore they would pull down their houses and every preaching-house near. Hearing of this at Stroud, I rode over immediately, and found

the whole country in terror, as they expected every night the mob from Wolverhampton to pull down the preaching-houses at Dudley, Darlaston, and Wednesbury, with the houses of the Methodists. They came first to Darlaston, a place long famous for rioting, hoping to meet with good encouragement. But a hog-butcher who lived near the house, hearing the alarm, leaped out of bed, seized his cleaver, and running out, swore death to the first that meddled with it. So unexpected a reception quite discouraged them, and made them run away faster than they came. Here we saw the good effect which the late revival had upon the town in general. There were few left who would either persecute themselves or suffer others to do it.

But Wolverhampton itself was still in a flame. A friend who was to accompany me to the town had procured a pair of pocket pistols, and offered me one. But I told him, 'No; I am in God's work, and trust to His protection. And you must return your pistols, or I cannot accept of your company.' He did so. When I came to the end of the town the alarm was quickly spread. So that before we came into the main street we had company enough. But they were restrained, so that we received little abuse, further than bad language. I immediately went to the justice, who granted a warrant; but the constable gave notice of it to the rioters, so that none was taken: some fled, some hid themselves, the rest set justice at defiance. This occasioned several neighbouring justices to fix a day for meeting in the town. When they met

several of the rioters were brought before them. Three were bound over to appear at Stafford, where all the magistrates gave attendance. The proof against the rioters was full, yet the honourable jury acquitted them all!

This gave them fresh spirits; so they hasted home with ribbons flying, and were saluted with bells and bonfires, in one of which they burned me and my friend in effigy. Our friends now found it more dangerous than ever to come into the town, or get to their houses. Before I left Stafford I waited on Lord D——, with Mr. Hayes, attorney, the person who prepared the mob, and himself made the first breach in the house. I told him plain, 'Either let Mr. Hayes rebuild the house, or we will try him for his life.' He promised it should be rebuilt in such a time, and it was built accordingly. So did God deliver us out of this complicated trouble. And all the time His work prospered.

But what could not be done by persecution has been done by those who brought in a new doctrine among us. This soon checked, and has now wellnigh destroyed, both the root and branch of vital religion. They who receive this new light not only despise and speak evil of those that begat them to God, but even deny the reality of that unspeakable blessing which they then received. They say, 'We were then blind, and knew nothing.' Happy ignorance! which enabled them to endure reproach, pain, want; yea, to carry their lives in their hands, counting nothing dear but to have a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man.

In August, 1770, I was stationed in Bristol Circuit. Here I met with various exercises. But I was more than conqueror, and good was done in Bristol, and in several other places—particularly at Bath, where they were obliged first to enlarge and then to gallery the preaching-house. In the spring I was called to Monmouth to open a preaching-house, which was duly licensed. We preached with tolerable quietness till Sunday evening. The churchwardens then came before me, went in, and shut the doors. Meantime the street was all in an uproar. I went on with Mrs. Hern and Miss Fortune (my only companions) till we met the mob, who opened to the right and left and let us pass to the door. It was shut, but in a while I prevailed to have it opened. And one of them asked what authority I had to preach. I asked who he was. He said, 'The churchwarden.' 'Then you have no authority to question me. I shall not show mine but to a proper person. And I desire you will either behave well, or withdraw.' Another said, 'Sir, will you show it me? I am the chief constable.' I answered, 'Sir, I will.' While he was reading, the churchwarden looked over him, and said, 'O sir, this will not do.' I said, 'Sir, it will do for me; and I require all of you who stay to behave in a becoming manner.' The chief constable then withdrew; but the crowd was so great that they could not half get in. And those without were so noisy that nothing could be heard. So after a time I judged it best to withdraw.

In the evening the mayor sent desiring me to

attend him in the morning at the Town Hall. I went. Soon after came the mayor, the clerk of the peace, and all the chief men of the town. The rector and curate used some harsh words. The other gentlemen behaved civilly. But they asked so many questions, and spoke so many at a time, it was impossible to answer. I said, 'Gentlemen, be pleased to speak one at a time.' But this could not be done. Only they all agreed in desiring me to promise that I would come no more. I told them I would make no such promise—no, not if my life depended upon it. So we parted as we met, and the next day I got safe to Bristol.

In 1773 I was stationed at Canterbury. During my stay in this circuit we had a fair prospect of doing good at Gravesend. The congregations were large, and not a few appeared to be much affected. The society increased, and all things were in a flourishing condition, till a poor creature, one George Gould, appeared, who at first came as one of our friends. But no sooner had he gained the affections of the people than he pulled off the mask and preached Calvinism. And hereby such a wound was given to the society as is not healed to this day.

In the year 1777 I was appointed for the Colne Circuit. It was not long before that the gallery in the preaching-house, being full of people, had fallen flat to the ground; and though no one was killed, yet some limbs were broken and many poor people bruised. This obliged me to travel through many societies, in order to defray those large expenses of taking care of those

that were hurt, and rebuilding the gallery, as well as building and furnishing a house for the preacher. But whatever fatigue I had was abundantly made up by the kindness and liberality of our brethren.

Having prepared the materials for the preaching-house at Padiham, the next year, on October 1, we laid the foundation. But a person pretending a claim to the ground, when the wall was about a yard high, threw a part of it down. We bore this outrage, and proceeded in the work. This emboldened him to engage three masons, who came in the night, when the roof was on, wrested out the sides of both doors with the lintels, with a yard of the wall above. They broke the sides of the two large windows, near three feet on each side; they then made a large hole in the pillar between the two windows, intending to throw down the house. But suddenly such a panic seized them that first one and then the other stopped short and ran away. These returned no more. But their employer, with the third man, resolved to finish their work. Presently he was himself struck with a fear of being killed, and ran away, dragging his fellow with him.

Being averse to law, we bore this also; but we set a watch on the house every night till it was covered in and licensed, in hopes we should then be quiet. But on December 21 he brought two men at eleven in the forenoon, with a pick-axe and a crow, and directed them to begin at one of the doors, which was not quite repaired. The workmen stood amazed; but several of the

townsmen quickly came to the place, two of whom were remarkably weak men, and one of them lame besides. One laid hold of the pickaxe, and one on the crow. They that held them were stout men, the terror of the country. Many took part on each side. I was in my room, and at first thought not to stir out. But fearing mischief might be done, I sent for a constable, and myself walked to the chapel. The young man was struggling with him that held the pickaxe, to whom I spoke, and he promised to be quiet. Meantime some took the crow from the other man, which their employer observing, struck a lad that helped them. He returned the blow. A battle ensued, wherein the gentleman was worsted, and rolled in the dirt.

Finding there was no other way, I procured a warrant from Serjeant Aspinwall for the chief rioters. This was served immediately. The next morning we waited upon him, at his house, and he bound them all over to the assizes. But recollecting that Mr. W——n had said before the serjeant he was willing to refer the whole affair to him, I sent him word I was willing too, and desired him to name the time and place. But he would do neither. After preaching at Millend in the evening, I went to bed, but my sleep departed from me. However, I rose as usual, but before I went out of my room I heard a knocking at the door. It was one from Padiham, who mournfully cried out, 'O sir, we are all ruined! Mr. W——n has got a warrant for seven-and-twenty of us, and you are the first

in it. We must all be at the serjeant's by noon.' I told him I would be there. As soon as I came I saw Mr. W——n just going into the yard. I followed him close, to the great joy of my friends. We were near forty in number. The serjeant coming to the door, I asked why I was summoned. He answered, 'For a riot.' I said, 'Sir, you cannot but know that Mr. W. has done this out of mere litigiousness. But why should we trouble the whole country with our affairs? Cannot we settle it between ourselves?' To this Mr. W. agreed. So, as we had no bonds of arbitration ready, we both signed a memorandum to the same effect. The poor people then went home in peace. After some difficulties the bonds were signed; and after hearing all parties, the serjeant's sentence was, (1) That the ground (part of which we had purchased) should be equally divided between us and Mr. W.; and (2) That he should pay us five pounds for the damage which he had done. Thus we were at length delivered out of our trouble, and peace re-established at Padiham.

What I may meet with hereafter I know not: I can only say, I find it in my heart to spend and be spent for God in promoting His glory and the salvation of men. To that end I am determined still to preach the whole Methodist doctrine, and to see that the discipline, to which God has led us, be executed in all its branches. I see more and more that where it is not executed little lasting good is done. I know this is not the way of ease, nor the way to popularity. But as I set out without a view

to either, so I hope to continue, by the grace of God.

I remain,
Your affectionate and dutiful son in the gospel,
ALEXANDER MATHER.

Mr. Wesley says:

After reading and considering the foregoing account, I observed to Mr. Mather that he had wholly omitted one considerable branch of his experience, touching what is properly termed 'the great salvation.' He wrote me a full and particular answer, the substance of which I have subjoined:

'I answer, 1. With regard to the time and place, it was at Rotherham, in the year 1757, that I enjoyed it in a far larger degree than I ever did before, or do now. And although my situation the next year laid many hindrances in the way, yet I both preached it plainly and strongly encouraged those that had before experienced it, and such as professed to receive it at that time, either at Sunderland or elsewhere. This I continued to do in 1759 and 1760, in which time many were made partakers of it, in York, at and near Pocklington, in Hull, and various other places. It was the enjoyment of this which supported me in the trials I met with at Wednesbury in the two following years, during which many were added to the witnesses of it in Birmingham, Dudley, Darlaston, Wolverhampton, and Wednesbury. It was my own experience which emboldened me to assert it, even where it was opposed by our chief members,

partly because of the faults of some that professed it, but chiefly because of the natural enmity of their hearts to God.

'What I had experienced in my own soul was an instantaneous deliverance from all those wrong tempers and affections which I had long and sensibly groaned under, an entire disengagement from every creature, with an entire devotedness to God: and from that moment I found an unspeakable pleasure in doing the will of God in all things. I had also a power to do it, and the constant approbation both of my own conscience and of God. I had simplicity of heart and a single eye to God at all times and in all places, with such a fervent zeal for the glory of God and the good of souls as swallowed up every other care and consideration. Above all, I had uninterrupted communion with God, whether sleeping or waking. O that it were with me as when the candle of the Lord thus shone upon my head! While I call it to mind my soul begins to wing its way toward that immediate enjoyment of God. May it never be retarded, but press into the glorious liberty, which is equally free for all the sons of God.

'2. As to the manner wherein this work was wrought: (1) After I was clearly justified, I was soon made sensible of my want of it. For although I was enabled to be very circumspect, and had a continual power over outward and inward sin, yet I felt in me what I knew was contrary to the mind which was in Christ and what hindered me from enjoying and glorifying Him as I saw it was the privilege of a child of

God to do. And such I knew myself to be, both from the fruit and the witness of His Spirit, which I felt in a strong degree, supporting me in conflicts of a very close and particular nature. (2) My conviction of the need of a farther change was abundantly increased by the searching preaching of Mr. Walsh, of blessed memory. This kept my conscience very tender, even to a degree of scrupulosity, and helped me to be much in private prayer, and kept me watching thereunto. (3) When I saw my call to preach, the difficulties attending that office showed me more and more the need of such a change, that I might bear all things: and by searching the Scriptures, I saw the possibility of it more clearly and was stirred up to seek it more earnestly. (4) When I began travelling I had no end, aim, or design but to spend and be spent for God; not counting my life or anything dear, so I might finish my course with joy—which indeed I expected would be very short, as "I dealt my life at every blow." I saw as clearly as I do now that nothing furthers that end so much as a heart and life wholly devoted to God.

'This made me neglect the advantage I had in my youth of a tolerable acquaintance with Latin, which I could easily have recovered; but this and every other gain I counted but loss that I might win that intimacy with God which I still think to be the life of preaching. Therefore I husbanded all the time that I could save from company, eating, or sleeping, to lay out in wrestling with God for myself and the flock: so I devoted to God some part of every leisure hour,

over and above the hour from eleven to twelve in the forenoon, and from four to five in the afternoon. Herein I was sweetly drawn after God, and had many and large views of that salvation which I wanted, and which He had provided in His Son. The exceeding great and precious promises were clearly opened to me; and having a full assurance of the power and faithfulness of the Promiser, my soul often tasted of their sweetness. And though unbelief prevented my immediate possession, yet I had a blessed foretaste of them. This made me desire full enjoyment more and more. I abhorred whatever seemed to keep me from it. I sought out every obstruction. I was willing to offer up every Isaac, and inflamed with great ardour in wrestling with God, determined not to let Him go till He emptied me of all sin and filled me with Himself.

'This I believe He did when I ventured upon Jesus as sufficient to save to the uttermost. He wrought in me what I cannot express, what I judge it is impossible to utter. Yet I was not long without reasoning—not concerning the work (of this I was absolutely sure), but whether such and such things as I soon discovered in myself were consistent with it. And this had its use, as it qualified me to advise others who, though saved from sin, were tried in the same way.

'Upon this head I consulted Mr. Walsh, and his advice helped me in some degree; but God helped me much more in private prayer. Herein I was clearly satisfied, (1) That deliverance from sin does not imply deliverance from human in-

firmities. (2) That neither is it inconsistent with feeling our natural appetites, or with the regular gratification of them. And, (3) That salvation from sin is not inconsistent with temptations of various kinds. And all this you have clearly and fully declared in the *Plain Account of Christian Perfection.*

'I have only to observe that while my soul was following hard after God I had frequent temptations to resume my Latin, and learn the other languages, especially when I observed some of my brethren who had made some progress therein, though they had not the same advantages with me. But the comfort I found in spending all my time as above, and the thought that however this might recommend them to some hearers, yet they were not hereby more instrumental than before either in awakening, converting, or building up souls, made me quite easy about it. This I have considered as the only business and peculiar glory of a Methodist preacher. Not that I think our brethren who have made this progress have not been useful in all these respects, but I think they are not more useful than they were when they were strangers to these things. And I doubt whether they are so useful as they might have been, had they employed the same time, the same diligence, and the same intenseness of thought in the several branches of that work for which they willingly gave up all. For my own part, I want to feel the same principle ever actuating me which I felt the moment I set out.

'Upon the whole, I find abundant cause to

praise God for the support He has given me under various trials, and the wonderful deliverance from them. I praise Him for so preserving me from impatience in them that the enemy had no room to speak reproachfully. In all He has given me free access to the throne of grace, often with a strong confidence of deliverance. I bless God that the trials I have met with even from my brethren have never given me an inclination to decline the work, nor, for any time together, to be less active in any branch of it. I always considered I had nothing which I had not received, and that the design of the Giver was that all should be used with singleness of heart, to please God, and not man. I praise Him that though some of the affairs I have been engaged in, being quite new to me, so deeply employed my thought as sometimes to divert me from that degree of communion with God in which is my only happiness, and without which my soul can never be at rest, yet He gives me always to see that the fullness of the promise is every Christian's privilege, and that this and every branch of salvation is to be received now, by faith alone. And it can only be retained by the same means—by believing every moment. We cannot rest on anything that has been done, or that may be done hereafter. This would keep us from living a life of faith, which I conceive to be no other than the now deriving virtue from Jesus, by which we enjoy and live to God. My soul is often on the stretch for the full enjoyment of this without interruption; nor can I discharge my conscience without urging it upon all believers

now to come unto Him "who is able to save unto the uttermost!"'

Wesley adds:

CITY ROAD, LONDON, *January* 5, 1780.

I earnestly desire that all our preachers would seriously consider the preceding account. And let them not be content never to speak against the great salvation, either in public or private, and never to discourage either by word or deed any that think they have attained it—no, but prudently encourage them to 'hold fast whereunto they have attained,' and strongly and explicitly exhort all believers to 'go on to perfection'; yea, to expect full salvation from sin every moment, by mere grace, through simple faith.

JOHN WESLEY.

Mr. Mather was the President of the Conference in 1792.

Three of his letters may be given. The first is to Mr. Wesley [1]:

EVESHAM, *December* 17, 1760.

HONOURED SIR,

Grace, mercy, and peace be with you and yours! Glory be to God! His work prospers in many parts of this Round—particularly in Staffordshire, where our congregations are so large that we can scarce contain them. And God, who brings them together, does work among them; and not among the outward hearers only

[1] *The Arminian Magazine*, 1780, p. 496.

but also among our old members, so that above forty have found the Lord this last quarter. Most of these have been long seeking—some five, some seven, some ten years; yea, some from the first of your going to Wednesbury. Nor do I perceive that the reason of their not finding sooner has been, as it sometimes is, their negligence or disorderly walking—no, for the most part they have been diligent in all the means, and blameless in their lives.

Although at Wednesbury several have been added, and many converted this last quarter, yet the most remarkable part of the work of God has been in that old, persecuted, steadfast society, Darlaston, who, in the midst of all the parties that have been in Staffordshire, have stood unmoved to their first principles, never encouraging any other party—no, nor suffering any of a different judgement so much as to sing a hymn amongst them. And this their steadfastness was the more surprising as there were but about seven in the whole society (which consisted of forty-eight members) who professed saving faith at Michaelmas last. But, glory be to God! their number and their grace are greatly increased. Now there are above thirty out of the forty-eight who have saving faith, and have received it within these last six weeks—yea, many in a fortnight. And as their grace, so their number has increased thirty-three this quarter. Twenty-seven of them I joined last Thursday and Friday, many of whom had scarce ever heard till that week. Is anything too hard for the Almighty? Thou workest, and who can stay Thy hand?

The remarkable work amongst the outward people was occasioned by an apprentice of Mr. Thomas Day, whose heart the Lord touched in such a manner on Sunday night, December 7, that he could not rest, but roared the whole night, to the great alarm of the whole family and the neighbourhood. They prayed with him; but he still remained miserable till Monday morning, when his distress was such that his crying brought many together, insomuch that the house was filled and surrounded with people, before whom it pleased God to deliver him, and so to inflame his heart with love, and fill his mouth with praise, that the beholders were astonished. It pleased God also to open his mouth to speak to those who were present, so that none (no, not the most stout-hearted and greatest enemies to godliness) were able to resist the spirit and power wherewith he spake. They fell before his word, cried for mercy, and above twelve were delivered that day. So the whole exercise of that day was prayer and praise, as also of the two days following. When the boy went from house to house, even the wicked—who could not withstand his word, being cut to their hearts—cried for mercy, to whom he pointed out Christ and His willingness to receive them; and praying with them, many were delivered who had scarce heard a sermon. So visible is the change that they abandon all their former ways and company, and are full of love. It would rejoice your heart to see them under the word; particularly two children, about nine years of age, who talk so feelingly of the love of God that

they would amaze you. Nor was the flame quenched last Friday, the boy being still employed as before. This whole town, young and old, seems alarmed, and come in troops to the preaching at Wednesbury. O Lord, maintain Thy glorious cause, and ride prosperously in the gospel chariot, till the nations bow before Thee; and take Thou all the glory, for Thou art worthy! O, pray for me, that I may have wisdom in all things!

I am, dear sir,
Your affectionate son and servant in the gospel,
A. MATHER.

The next letter is to Mr. William Marriott, Jun.[1]

MY VERY DEAR MASTER MARRIOTT,

Yours of the 2nd ult. found me in the midst of our late Conference, where a great variety of new and important matters were agitated, and, as far as they could be, settled, after the most serious deliberations we were capable of using, with an eye to the general good of a large body, at that time much divided in sentiment on some of the subjects which came then under consideration. Although it was agreed by all that these things, in their use and manner, were not essential to the present or the eternal salvation of man, yet it was very necessary that they should be settled for the peace and prosperity of

[1] The second son of Mather's former employer was a wealthy and benevolent stockbroker, and this letter is to his eldest son, then fifteen. See Stevenson's *City Road Chapel*, pp. 572, 573.

our Connexion. How far this most valuable end will be answered by the things agreed upon time will prove the best evidence. But it may be said, as matters then stood, that everything was done to keep as near as possible to our old path.

There were, however, many pleasing circumstances connected with the Conference, and one which was very awful. The congregations were exceedingly large, and many of the people came from distant parts. Among the men who differed in judgement much moderation prevailed, with a larger measure of unity and brotherly love than I have observed for many years, accompanied by an earnest desire in all to be more devoted and useful than ever.

The awful circumstance to which I alluded fell upon a most valuable man, a member of this society. Having declined business, he brought his wife to Leeds, to spend a week at the Conference, which they did with much pleasure and spiritual profit. On their return, in a single-horse chaise (in which they came), they left the main road to go to Thorp-Arch (a watering-place), to spend a few days. The road being bad, the chaise was overturned. The woman was wounded in her forehead and otherwise bruised, while the man appeared to have received no hurt from the fall. He disentangled the horse, and with two handkerchiefs bound up the wound his wife had received. He appeared to be as composed in mind as free from bodily injury. Not being near any house, and unable to get up the carriage, they stayed in the rain till a kind Providence sent

a man to their aid. By his help they raised the chaise upon the wheels again. At this moment Mr. Fox grew pale, which being observed by the stranger, he caught him in his arms, and Mr. Fox instantly died!

To him sudden death was doubtless sudden glory. He was a truly pious, exemplary, humane, and very beneficent man. In him the society has lost a useful and an ornamental member; the world a shining example of meekness, gentleness, and every Christian virtue; his dear wife a kind, tender, and exceedingly affectionate husband; and, above all, the poor a liberal and generous benefactor, whose compassionate heart was ever touched with seeing or hearing of their distress. He was as ready to show his commiseration for their distress by the rising tear, as to relieve it by the liberal hand.

All these losses turn so much the more to the eternal gain of him who is now reaping the full reward of all his love to God, manifested in his love to man. This, sir, speaks to us, 'Go, and do thou likewise. Be ye therefore ready also; for at an hour when you think not, the Son of man cometh.' May our loins be found girt and our lights burning, and we ourselves as men who wait for their Lord's return from the wedding, that when He knocketh we may open to Him immediately! So shall we be blessed, whether He approaches in the evening or the morning, at midnight or at cock-crowing. So shall the end of all our mercies, means, and correspondence be fully answered; and my dear young friend will not regret that I have, without design, filled my

paper with some hints of this truly excellent man, and of his sudden transition from earth to Paradise.

I shall only add that such was the support which his dear wife found under her loss that, though she was an entire stranger, on a common, with the remains of her husband put into the carriage with her, to bring to the inhospitable village, where scarcely a door was open to admit them—the people at two inns and a private house having shut their doors at her approach—yet she was enabled to bear all with much fortitude and divine resignation. O sir, what but true religion, that which flows from the soul's knowledge of its interest in Christ, can avail under such circumstances? O my dear William, secure this! The way to obtain this you have expressed in your letter—believing in Christ Jesus. To Him I commend you, and am joined by mine in love to your dear parents, and Master Thomas.

Your affectionate friend,

A. MATHER.

HULL, *September* 4, 1793.

The last letter was addressed by Mr. Mather to the preachers in the London District, May 13, 1800:

VERY DEAR BRETHREN,

Being by sickness prevented from attending to the duties belonging to the Chairman of the District, when called to it at Canterbury, I nominated brother Wood, with a part of you, to transact the business then needful to be done;

the whole of which they, I doubt not, will lay before you to-morrow for your full investigation and final decision.

The same unerring hand still rests upon me, and sees good to deny me the pleasure of assembling with you—a pleasure with which I have long been indulged on these occasions. Yet He enables me to assure you that I have not, for near fifty years, followed a cunningly devised fable, either in what I have received or taught. That word which has been my support in every former trial I prove, in the present long affliction, to be the power of God to my salvation, and that in such a degree that I would neither do nor suffer less for its promotion in the world than, by grace, I have been able to do and suffer since August 15, 1757; nor since March 2, 1791, you helping by your prayers, and that rich supply of the Spirit of His grace being vouchsafed which He has afforded His worthless servant when looked unto. Meantime I now, (1) recommend unto you brother Wood, as my substitute in the District Meeting and Stationing Committee—since, if spared so long, it is not probable I shall be capable of enduring the fatigues of attending. (2) I exhort, as you all wish the prosperity of the work, that you would gladly submit to the fullest and most minute examination of every part of your conduct, conversation, doctrine, and discipline, as is set forth in your Minutes, beginning with mine. For I am ready to submit to every censure you may lay on me, and to acknowledge and amend everything you may point out as wrong. And I entreat that you will herein give not a tacit

consent to these things, but an express assurance of your hearty approbation. If you know as I do, and feel, the former will little avail in a dying moment. I hope you will be able to say (from the London District, to the Conference), 'We bear the most unequivocal testimony to our brethren's good conduct in every part of their office.' Thus you shall never be ashamed to speak with any enemy in the gate.

To God I commend you, and wish to be commended by you all, till we are admitted to His glory. Even so prays your weak but still affectionate friend and brother in Christ,

A. MATHER.

The following sketch of Mr. Mather's character and death is from his funeral sermon by the Rev. Joseph Benson, preached in City Road and Great Queen Street Chapels on August 31, 1800.[1]

In August, 1757, which is forty-three years ago, he was received as a travelling preacher, and with Thomas Hanby, Thomas Tobias, and Thomas Lee, was sent into the Epworth Circuit, which then included Gainsborough, Grimsby, Barrow, Doncaster, Rotherham, Sheffield, and divers other circuits. Here it pleased God to give him much of His presence in his own soul, and to let him see some fruit of his labour.

Since that time till last spring, when by excessive weakness he was obliged to desist, he has been constantly employed as a travelling preacher in the Methodist Connexion; has laboured in most circuits in the kingdom; has been peculiarly

[1] *Methodist Magazine*, 1800, p. 531.

well received, and, I believe I may say, very useful in them all. In labours, you all know, he has been abundant; and as he laboured in dependence on divine grace, and with a single eye to the glory of God, He who sent him did not suffer him to labour in vain, but gave him many seals to his ministry. Many, I am persuaded, were awakened, many justified, and believers in general edified by his ministry, wherever he came. What sort of a preacher he was you in general well know, having heard him frequently, not only during the last two years, in which he has had the care of this circuit, but many of you twenty-seven or twenty-eight years ago, when also he laboured in London, as you have likewise since that time often heard him occasionally. So that it is not necessary I should give you any character of him in this respect. You will generally allow, I think, that he had very clear and just views of the truth as it is in Jesus in all its branches, and that his preaching was peculiarly instructive and very forcible and impressive. He was never at a loss for abundance and variety of edifying matter; and had he had the aid of a classical education, his discourses, through a better arrangement, would have appeared to much more advantage. His apprehension was peculiarly quick, his genius fertile, and his memory tenacious. Being naturally a man of strong passions, and divine grace having softened and humbled his heart, he generally felt himself the truths he delivered to others, and in consequence thereof his hearers felt them too.

Indeed he had a feeling heart in every sense,

especially towards persons in want and affliction—with whom he always sympathized, whom he was always ready to relieve according to his ability, and for the relief of whom he was often entrusted with considerable sums of money by some friends who were rich and benevolent, and whose almoner he was. He was a man of strict integrity, of exemplary conduct, and of great zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. This made him instant, in season and out of season, in his endeavours to spread the gospel of Christ, which he well knew to be the grand means God hath made choice of both to save mankind and to advance His own glory. Nor did he confine his efforts for this purpose to the pulpit; but in private conversation, and in all companies where it could with propriety be done, he laboured to diffuse the odour of the knowledge of God and of the truths of His precious Word. I have known few persons more careful than he was to improve conversation to the edification of those present, or more apt to teach, to reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine. And as his life was consistent with his teaching, and he was 'an example to believers in word, in behaviour, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity,' what he advanced was generally well received and attended with a blessing.

As the work of God in general was dear to him, so especially the welfare of the Methodist Connexion. This, with the doctrine and discipline thereof, lay very near his heart indeed; and when, at any time or place, matters wore a gloomy aspect and circumstances arose which seemed to

militate against the safety or prosperity of our cause it touched him to the quick, and he was very prone to yield to excessive grief. And this, perhaps, was his great failing—for that he had failings I do not deny, for I do not deny that he was a man. His grief on these occasions sometimes wore the appearance of, and was mistaken for, anger; and perhaps I may allow that in a sense it was anger, even anger similar to that which He felt who, we are informed, 'looked round about on the multitude with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts.' During these thirty years that I have known him I never knew anything affect him so deeply as what he thought touched the cause of God and affected the welfare of the Methodist Connexion.

What his spirit and conduct were of late many of you know better than I. He has been your minister, and the superintendent of the societies in this city and neighbourhood, these two last years; and you have had frequent opportunities of observing how he conducted himself, and, which is the chief evidence of the power of grace, with what degree of patience and resignation he supported the tedious, complicated, and painful affliction wherewith it pleased God to exercise and perfect him. For it was necessary that he, like his Master, should be perfected through sufferings. His sufferings, indeed, for some years have occasionally been great, but for six or eight months nearly uninterrupted. At the time I last saw him, the time referred to before, his affliction was great indeed. And what I was then a witness to I shall never forget. The

moment his dear friend Mr. Pawson and I entered the room his pale face, his emaciated body, and his death-like appearance struck and affected us exceedingly, and for some minutes we both remained silent, and wept. At length he attempted to address us; and with a low whisper, not being able to speak above his breath, he said, 'Through the mercy of God I have got hither by a miracle; but why I am here I know not, for I seem to be of no use.' I said, 'You are here that you may be an example of patience, by suffering the will of God, as you have long been of diligence in doing it. And doubtless you find this a harder duty than the other.' 'Indeed I do,' said he; 'but I find the grace of God sufficient for this also.' He then expressed himself in the most clear, pertinent, and feeling manner concerning our redemption by Christ, as I have mentioned above, and of his whole dependence being on this alone and not on anything he had done or suffered for salvation. We were both much affected while he discoursed on this subject. After this he spoke concerning the Methodist Connexion in a way which showed how much his soul was wrapped up in the prosperity of it, and gave us many cautions and advices, urging us especially to attend, at the Conference, to the state of the poor preachers, many of whom, he said, he knew to be in great want and distress. After he had quite spent himself with speaking to us on these and some other subjects, we kneeled down to pray, as we had reason to believe, for the last time. But we could not speak much. We could do little more

than weep in silence, and gave vent to our tears and sighs. We then bade him farewell. Mr. Pawson, indeed, might intend to see him the next day; but I took my leave of him, not expecting to see him again, as it has happened, till the resurrection of the just.

He continued to be patient and resigned, as he had been all along from the first attack of his disorder, and retained his confidence in God, and his hope of everlasting life, to the very last; exemplifying, in a glorious manner, in his experience and behaviour, the following well-known and striking description of a triumphant death:

> Through nature's wreck, through vanquished agonies
> (Like the stars struggling through this midnight gloom),
> What gleams of joy! what more than human peace!
> Where the frail mortal—the poor abject worm?
> No, not in death, the mortal to be found!
> His conduct is a legacy for all,
> Richer than Mammon's for his single heir.
> His comforters he comforts; great in ruin,
> With unreluctant grandeur, gives, not yields,
> His soul sublime; and closes with his fate.[1]

On Saturday night, August 16, speaking to his much-esteemed friend, Mr. Robert Spence, of York, he said, 'What I told you upon your first visiting me after my arrival at York I still feel to be a truth, namely, that I have nowhere to look, nor anything else to depend upon for salvation, but Christ, and my confidence in Him is firm as a rock. My faith has frequently been assaulted during my affliction in an unusual manner, but it has never shrunk in the least

[1] Young's *Night Thoughts*, ii.

degree. I feel a blessed evidence of my acceptance, and a sacred sense of God's presence being with me always. How comfortable are these words, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." "God so loved us, that He gave His only Son" to be the propitiation for us. There is no other name, no other Redeemer; on Him my soul relies. Mine is a hope of more than forty years: it cannot easily be shaken.'

On Monday, the 18th, being in extreme anguish, he said, 'I long to be gone, I long to be gone,' and desired me to pray for his dismission. After rising from my knees I said that this could only be asked with submission. He sweetly and reverently answered, 'With great submission; with great submission.' After pausing awhile he said, 'I am happy in Jesus, but my sufferings are very great'; and added:

> 'Rivers of life divine I see,
> And trees of paradise.

O, let me be there—I'll be there, there, there! O that it might be this night! O, hide me among these trees! Here may I have an abiding place!

> 'Tis there, with the lambs of Thy flock,
> There only I covet to rest.

But if I may not have the privilege, the happiness, the honour of being with Thee this night, may I be resigned to Thy will. O that exercise of praise and thanksgiving! It has been the delight of my soul, my chief exercise on earth. I have

loved Thy word, Thy law, Thy people, and I still love them.

> Let it not my Lord displease,
> That I would die to be His guest.

Jesus answers, "Thou art all fair, My love; there is no spot in thee. Arise, My love, My fair one, and come away." Jesus has made me all fair.' Again, when labouring under the most extreme pain, anguish, and anxiety (for his complicated afflictions racked his body with the most torturing sufferings, and bowed down his formerly strong spirits with the heaviest depression), he most affectingly cried out, 'O God, my heart is broken within me. Why are Thy chariot-wheels so long in coming? Lord, grant me patience'; and then, as though his prayers were immediately answered, he calmly said:

> To patient faith the prize is sure,
> And they that to the end endure
> The cross, shall wear the crown.

On Wednesday morning, the 20th, after a night of inexpressible suffering, he was composed, and slumbered a little. When he awoke he seemed surprised to find himself still in the body, and said, 'Why did you call me back? I have been in Paradise. As surely as I shall go there again, I have been in heaven this morning.' Then, after taking leave of, and giving his dying advice to, the family, he turned to Mrs. Mather and said, 'As for you, my dear, I can say nothing to you that I have not already said; but' (pointing to the Bible) 'that book is yours, and the

Author of it.' On this night, amongst many other heavenly breathings, I observed him to say, 'O Jesus, whom I have loved, whom I do love, in whom I delight, I surrender myself unto Thee.' This was a night of peculiar affliction, which he bore with the utmost degree of Christian patience.

On Friday, the 22nd, about two hours before his departure, and nearly the last words he uttered, he was heard to say, 'I now know that I have not sought Thee in vain; I have not—I have not—I have not.' And then, 'O Thou that causedst light to shine out of darkness, shine upon my soul with the light of the knowledge of the Son of God. That name above every other name for ever dear, it dispels all my fears. O, proclaim, proclaim Jesus! Tell me, shall I be with Him this night?' On being answered, 'Yes, there is no doubt of it,' he cried out, 'He that I have served for near fifty years will not forsake me now. Glory be to God and the Lamb, for ever and ever! Amen! amen! amen!'

Soon after this his voice failing, he spoke very little audibly; but by the motion of his lips appeared engaged in silent ejaculations, till, seeming to fall into a sweet slumber, he silently and almost imperceptibly breathed his soul into the arms of his loved and adored Redeemer, about four o'clock in the afternoon.

Thus lived and thus died Alexander Mather, than whom, perhaps, no person has been more universally respected among us, as an intelligent and judicious man, a pious and exemplary Christian, a sympathizing and steady friend, and a faithful, diligent labourer in the Lord's vineyard.

What was said of Demetrius by St. John (as some of you heard from Mr. Bradburn this morning) was indeed very applicable to him: 'He had a good report of all men, and of the truth itself.' May we, whether preachers or people, follow him as he followed Christ! Considering the end of his conversation, and how the Lord supported him in his last moments, may we imitate his faith and patience, and persevere in our endeavours to aid the good cause which he so long laboured to support and help forward in the earth—the cause which the apostles, the evangelists, the saints, and the martyrs of former ages had so much at heart, which the Son of God Himself came from heaven to promote, and for which He did not think it too much to give His life. We ourselves, also, let us remember, are ready to be offered, and the time of our departure is likewise at hand. Let us, like our departed friend, make it our chief care to 'fight the good fight, to finish our course, and keep the faith'; that for us also, through the same Redeemer, and in consequence of redemption in Him, there may be laid up 'a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, may give us in that day; and not to us only, but to all that love His appearing.' Amen! amen!

His friend Mr. John Pawson wrote an account which appeared in the *Methodist Magazine*, 1801, p. 112:

For many years, as he interested himself in everything which concerned our Connexion, so

he was constantly employed in the greatest difficulties which happened among us. And as no one was better qualified for this kind of work, so no man would more heartily or more cheerfully engage therein. Inasmuch as for many years past I have acted in concert with him, on a variety of very trying occasions, I can testify from my own knowledge what unwearied pains he has taken, both with his tongue and his pen, what patience and longsuffering he has exercised, when having to do either with very ignorant or with headstrong men, in order to preserve or restore peace to particular societies. On all such occasions, although I sometimes differed in judgement from him, yet I most sincerely believe that his eye was single, and that he only wished to promote the honour of God and the prosperity of His work.

His experience as a Christian was both deep and clear. As he could not rest without a clear manifestation of the love of God, so, I am persuaded, he retained his confidence in the Redeemer, through the whole of his travels, to his latest moments. And not only so, but soon after he was satisfied of his interest in Christ he was convinced of the necessity of being wholly sanctified; and as he then had the privilege of sitting under the heart-searching ministry of Mr. Wesley, and also of the late Mr. Walsh, he never rested till the Lord brought him into this glorious liberty. And although he informs us that he did not always retain that degree of grace which was then given him, yet I am inclined to believe that he never wholly lost that blessing, but reaped

much advantage from what the Lord then communicated to him as long as he lived.

He was generally exceeding lively in his own soul, and hence he conducted the worship of God in the most animating and spirited manner. As I was stationed with him in London the year before he died, I could not but observe that in meeting the penitents at the intercession, and on many other occasions, he appeared with all the sprightliness and vigour of youth; and even at our watch-nights and love-feasts he took a large share of the work, and went through the whole in the most lively and edifying manner. Indeed, he seemed as if he were never weary in the service of his blessed Master.

As he well knew the importance of secret prayer, so he spent much time in this holy exercise. He kept up a constant intercourse with God, and made all his requests known to Him, both for himself, his friends, the church of God, and the nation at large. He had learned from the sacred Scriptures the necessity of living by faith in the Redeemer, and knew by blessed experience how great a privilege it is to be admitted into the presence-chamber of an infinitely gracious God, to lay all our wants and weaknesses open before Him, and in the name of Jesus, and in the power of His Spirit, to wrestle in prayer for the accomplishment of all the precious promises recorded in the Bible. He could not have maintained his ground against the violent opposition which he frequently met with, nor could he have endured the heavy trials he was obliged to pass through, had he

not thus given himself up to prayer. I most sincerely wish that in this respect we may all copy his example, and that we may so walk with God through life that, like him, we may be divinely supported and comforted in death, so as to leave the same blessed testimony behind us which he has done.

As he lived near to God in private, so in his conversation with his friends he was generally cheerful, yet serious, solid, spiritual, and instructive. He never appeared to be at a loss for a subject for edifying discourse, and had generally much freedom of mind when engaged in Christian conversation. Our blessed Lord informs us 'that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh,' and that 'out of the good treasure of the heart the good man bringeth forth good things.' These words were remarkably verified in my friend. For as the word of God dwelt richly in him, as the apostle says it ought to do in every Christian, so his zeal for the honour of God, and the desire he felt to edify those he conversed with, led him to make a proper use of that sacred treasure which was lodged in his memory. There is but too much reason to fear that it is again becoming unfashionable to introduce religious subjects in conversing with our friends. This, in my opinion, is no sign of a growth in grace, but rather the contrary. If we are only serious, spiritual, and devout when in the house of God, why do we pray that He would make us always so? And if we only show the people the necessity of living in the presence of God while we are in

the pulpit, but when conversing with them appear as if we had no design to be so ourselves, I fear our discourses will have no very lasting effect upon them.

As Mr. Mather was acquainted with the state of religion throughout our Connexion, and with every remarkable event which happened amongst us, whether prosperous or adverse, by keeping up a general correspondence with the principal people, as well as with many of the preachers, so he brought everything before the Lord in prayer, or thanksgiving, as occasion required. For as no one had the prosperity of the work of God more deeply at heart, so, I believe, no man more constantly and fervently wrestled with the Lord in prayer for the enlargement, as well as the establishment, of the Redeemer's kingdom in the world, than he did.

He was a man of remarkably tender feelings; and as he constantly visited the afflicted, the tempted, and those who were in distress, so he was always ready to pray with, to comfort, encourage, and relieve all such, to the utmost of his power. In this respect he had the advantage of many of his brethren, as we have reason to believe that several wealthy and well-disposed persons made him their almoner, and he had considerable sums to dispose of as he saw necessity required. Hence he was able to assist several of our poor preachers and their distressed families in the course of the year, which the Conference had little or no knowledge of. And I have known him to contribute very liberally towards the relief of some

particular persons who had before used him exceedingly ill, when he saw them brought into distressing circumstances. When on certain occasions it was said, 'But such a one has acted very improperly, and deserves no notice,' it was usual for him to reply, 'It is very true; but yet he is now in distress, therefore we should help him out of it as well as we can.' I will not say that he was never imposed upon, or that he never relieved persons who made a bad use of his bounty. I am inclined to believe the contrary, and that his compassion for the distressed led him more than once to plead the cause of some very unworthy objects. But allowing this to be the case, he erred on the charitable side, and therefore may well be excused.

At the general Conferences he took an active part in all our affairs. During the life of Mr. Wesley he was for many years what some persons called his right-hand man. He certainly assisted him very much on various difficult occasions, and was a principal member of the select Committee which he made choice of to advise and assist him in various important affairs which from time to time were laid before the Conference. And since Mr. Wesley's death it is well known that nothing of any moment was done amongst us but he was more or less concerned therein. The preachers in general paid a great regard to his judgement; as many of them had been long acquainted with him, and were well satisfied of his uprightness, and that he had not only the interest of particular persons, but also of the whole Connexion, very

much at heart. I never was yet acquainted with the man who was more ready to serve a friend than he was. It seemed to give him the most sensible pleasure to engage in any extraordinarily difficult affairs, in order to assist those who desired his help; and he certainly was well qualified to transact almost any kind of business, for he was blessed with a large share of sense, and had a general knowledge of men and things. I have now attended thirty-nine Conferences, and I never knew him absent from any till the last year; and as he had in all these years been concerned in stationing the preachers, and in the most difficult parts of our business, especially since the death of our honoured father, for which he was certainly well qualified, so many of us thought we could not do well without him. But herein the wonderful goodness of God, and the methods He takes to convince mankind that the greatest, the wisest, and the most useful of men are no more than instruments in His hand, are very observable. And no one must glory in man; but let him that glorieth glory in the Lord, and confess, to the praise of His name, that the help that is done upon earth He doeth it Himself.

But although I so highly esteemed Mr. Mather, and praise the Lord for the grace and gifts which were in him, yet I am far from supposing that he was wholly free from human infirmity. O, no; he had his weaknesses, and, no doubt, was deeply sensible of and humbled before God on account of them. But, with many other

truly amiable and useful men, I have known him blamed by some persons where I thought he deserved praise. A complaint was made against him some years ago, and was believed by many, that he was growing rich by the gospel, and was laying up treasures upon earth. Those who know what the income of a Methodist preacher is cannot but know, at the same time, that this is impossible. In vindication of my faithful friend, I would observe that his first wife, as well as himself, was a very great economist. They managed their little property with extraordinary prudence. For many years she had no servant, and conducted all her household affairs with such frugality that they were enabled to assist his aged father, who by his own imprudent conduct was greatly reduced in his circumstances, and who had treated his son with cruelty when he was yet a boy of twelve years of age. Here Mr. Mather set an example worthy the imitation of all children, by returning good for evil when his unkind father fell into distress in his old age. But this was not all: by the good management of their temporal concerns, they were enabled to do that for their son which others could not have done without very considerable assistance from some other quarter. Not that Mr. Mather sought high things for his son, or that he wished to make him great in this world—very far from it. He placed him in such a line of life where, if Divine Providence had not interposed, he never would have made any considerable figure in life. Three different times was this good man disappointed

in placing out his son, so that he did not know what course to take. Then it was that a child of so many prayers was owned of God, and unexpectedly led into that line of life in which I doubt not but he is made a blessing to mankind. And I am happy to have it to say that the son has had the honour and satisfaction to make the last hours of so kind a father as easy and happy as filial affection and tenderness could possibly make them, having, what I do not doubt he sincerely wished, the painful pleasure to accommodate his father at his house for some weeks before he made his exit. So kind, so tender, so affectionate a father certainly deserved the best return a son could make ; and I heartily praise the Lord on his behalf, he was not disappointed. But all Christian parents are not thus highly favoured. The kindness of parents to their children is too often but ill requited, and their old age is embittered by the bad conduct of those in whom they greatly delighted. and on whose account they have suffered much, But Mr. Mather's last moments were made as easy as [possible by] the utmost attention of a most affectionate wife, who was ready to lay down her own life for his sake, and of a dutiful son, who seriously thought that he could never do enough for his father. Thus did the Lord make all his bed in his sickness, according to His promise, as His servant had ever shown himself ready to visit and comfort the afflicted and the dying in their distresses.

Persons who act in a public station, either in the church or in the world, let them be as

prudent as they may, are sure to give offence to some people. Innocence itself could not pass through the world without blame. And though Mr. Mather was highly esteemed by very many, yet he was set at nought, despised, and condemned by others. Hence I well know that I shall not be able to give such an account of him as will meet with the approbation of those on both sides. This I judge to be impracticable. But my design is to be impartial; and therefore, as for the honour of God I would endeavour to set forth those Christian virtues in which he excelled, so I would not attempt to represent him as an angel, but only as a man liable to mistakes and human infirmities.

Considered as a minister, he certainly was highly honoured of God, not only in that he was blessed with very excellent gifts and qualifications for the work unto which the Lord had called him, but in that his labours in the gospel were attended with very considerable success. His understanding was remarkably clear in the whole mystery of man's redemption by Christ Jesus, in the nature and extent of gospel salvation, and in the way which the blessed God hath pointed out for fallen man to be put in possession of all the unsearchable riches of Christ. For although he was born in Scotland, and brought up a Presbyterian, yet it is well known that he was strongly attached to the Established Church. He attended the service of the Church and the sacrament whenever opportunity served, and exhorted others to do the same. He was blessed with a sound judgement, a quick appre-

hension, and a retentive memory. He firmly believed that Jesus Christ tasted death for every man, and faithfully and constantly offered salvation to all in His name. His zeal for the salvation of souls was very great, and his diligence in the work was highly exemplary. He was favoured with a strong constitution, which he did not spare. By travelling long journeys, in bad roads, in all sorts of weather, and often preaching three, sometimes four, yea, five times a day, he wore it out in hard labour, till his Lord said unto him, 'Come up hither.' It may be said of him, with the greatest propriety, 'In labours more abundant,' for he certainly followed the apostle's rule, 'Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season.' He rushed through every open door, and was instrumental in opening not a few, planting the gospel in many places. And, according to the direction given to the prophet, he lifted up his voice like a trumpet, and cried aloud to sinners of all sorts, solemnly warning them, in the name of the Lord, to break off their sins by repentance, and to turn to the great Shepherd and Bishop of immortal souls.

He bore a faithful testimony against that dangerous error that a man may be in a state of favour and acceptance with God and yet have no evidence of it. He constantly and strongly insisted upon the knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins and the abiding witness of the Holy Spirit, and clearly proved these precious doctrines by the express testimony of the holy Scripture. But if he excelled in any

thing above another, in preaching, it was in building up believers in their most holy faith, teaching them how to improve their present privileges, and exercise the grace already received, in bringing forth fruit unto holiness, in waiting upon God in all His ordinances, and in the steady and constant performance of every social and relative duty. Add to this that he was remarkable for teaching and exhorting all to press forward toward the mark for the prize of their high calling. For as he firmly believed that the design of our Lord in all that He did and suffered for us was that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and restore us not only to the favour but also to the image of God, and as he well knew the mighty opposition this glorious truth met with from the carnal mind which is in every man by nature, as well as from some of the friends of religion, he saw it to be his duty clearly to state, fully to prove, and zealously to insist upon this blessed truth, so that those who attended upon his ministry might see the nature of this great salvation, and be stirred up to follow after, in order that they might apprehend that for which they were apprehended of God in Christ Jesus.

He constantly preached a free, a full, and a present salvation, having clear views of the meaning of that expressive word, 'By grace ye are saved through faith.' He had witnessed the saving, sanctifying power of living faith in his own soul; and therefore, after the example of his Lord, he proclaimed, 'According to thy faith be it done unto thee.' 'If thou canst believe,

all things are possible to him that believeth.' But being well experienced in the deep things of God, he was not easily deceived by external appearances. His preaching was not only experimental, explaining every part of the work of God upon the soul, but it was also practical. He taught the necessity of carrying religion into every part of our conduct, into the closet, the family, the shop, or the market, in order that in all things it might appear that we walk with God and live under a sense of His presence, continually saying in our hearts, 'Thou God seest me!' My highly esteemed friend was led out in this line of preaching so much on some occasions that he was sometimes represented as a legal preacher. He saw, with heartfelt grief, that conformity to this world, in its various branches, was breaking in like a flood upon our societies. He saw that there was not that depth of solid piety, that degree of serious godliness in many, that he wished to see in all. And he was not without a degree of fear that some preachers were not always upon their guard against that levity of spirit which too many of the people are carried away with, and that they did not sufficiently see the destructive tendency of what the apostle calls 'foolish talking and jesting.' He was very far from pleading the cause of what has been properly enough called 'sour godliness'; but still he thought that our Lord's words had their meaning, and were of deep importance, 'For every idle word that a man shall speak, he shall give an account in the day of judgement.' As he knew that he was called to imitate Christ

and His apostles, so he was persuaded that levity of spirit and unprofitable conversation were not sanctioned by their example.

With what diligence and constancy, with what holy zeal and fervency of spirit, with what natural eloquence and divine pathos, he delivered the whole counsel of God from the pulpit, thousands and tens of thousands can testify—many of whom can joyfully confess, to the honour of God, that they are seals to his ministry, and many others that they have been established and built up in the truth by his instrumentality.

When he first began to act in a public capacity he had a considerable natural defect in his delivery—he spoke with such extreme quickness that very few could understand him; yet with care and perseverance he entirely overcame this infirmity.

As Mr. Mather was clear and explicit upon every part of the Christian doctrine, experience, and practice, so he was exact in enforcing every branch of our excellent discipline. Meeting the societies, regulating the bands, holding love-feasts, keeping watch-nights, and excluding improper persons from the society were all constantly attended to by him. He took great care to fill up the duties of that station in which he stood, and never would leave any part of the work which he apprehended to belong to him to any other person. He was so very particular herein that he sometimes gave offence to the brethren who laboured with him; but in this also he acted from principle. Whether we view him as a Christian, a minister, a husband, a father, or a

friend, as he took the Word of God for his rule and the Spirit of God for his Guide and Helper, so he acted in these several relations as a man of God, a faithful servant of his beloved Master.

Thus did my dear friend spend his forty-three years of itinerancy among us, and wore out as firm a constitution in diligent and faithful labour as almost any man was ever blessed with. But, like Moses, he had 'respect to the recompence of reward,' which awaits those who turn many to righteousness. And as he spent his life in the service of God, he found the advantage arising from it upon his death-bed. He then had the supporting and comforting presence of the Lord with him, so that he bore with unbroken patience a very long and painful illness, and witnessed in death the sufficiency of divine grace to make him more than conqueror over his last enemy. How wonderfully he was supported, how graciously he was comforted, how joyfully he looked death in the face, and with what holy triumph he finished his course upon earth, and entered into the joy of his Lord, hath already been made known to the world; and, in consideration of this, let those be ashamed who have loaded this faithful servant of God with reproach, who have poured out floods of contempt upon him, to the wounding of his character and hindering of his usefulness, as far as their influence would go. But he is now hid from the scourge of the tongue; and though they send forth their arrows, even bitter words, they can wound him no more.

My beloved brethren, we have lived to see our master taken from our head—our Joshua, our

chief leader, under God, removed into Abraham's bosom; we have seen our elders in Israel, one after another, taken away, so that very few of them are left behind—Messrs. Hanby, Thompson, Murlin, Furz, Roberts, and Mather have all taken their everlasting flight in a very few years, and we shall soon follow them. Let us, then, 'work while it is called to-day.' Let us copy their pious example—let us follow them as they followed Christ; and, if it be possible, let us labour to excel them in holiness and usefulness—let us fervently and constantly pray that a double portion of that spirit by which they were influenced may be poured out upon us all, so that we may finish well at the last, and unite with our dear brethren who are gone before us in singing everlasting praises to our God and Saviour.

It is not likely that I should remain much longer with you; but my daily prayer shall be, as long as I am spared, that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ may ever bless and be present with you, that He may make all of you not only burning and shining lights in the church, but also an abundant blessing in your generation, so that when I shall sleep with my fathers you may still be planting and watering in the vineyard of the Lord, till you also enter into your Master's joy. Take courage, my brethren: though men die, yet the Lord liveth; and He hath promised to be with you always, even to the end. Be much in prayer for the prosperity of Sion. Be very serious, watchful, and heavenly-minded. Be dead to the world,

and alive to God. Be very zealous for the honour of your Lord, and exceedingly diligent in the work unto which He hath called you. Preach the gospel with all simplicity and clearness, and in the spirit and power of Elias. In a word, be primitive Methodists—Methodists altogether! That you may be such is the ardent prayer of your affectionate brother and sincere friend.

Joseph Wood writes [1]:

In addition to what my dear friend Mr. Pawson has said of that good man Mr. Mather, I beg leave to mention a few things respecting him which occurred the last year. As I was much in company with him from the time that I came to London in 1799, and more especially after his illness commenced, I had a greater opportunity of knowing his spirit and conversation than I had ever had before. And, I must say, the more I knew him, the more I saw of his great excellency. Never shall I forget the faithful and affectionate manner in which he spake to two persons in this city, who had been indulged with society tickets, from time to time, but had seldom, or never, met in class for some years. It seemed to me, at the time, to be his final warning to them, to take up their cross and deny themselves, or expect the entire loss of every serious impression. I believe he never was in that house afterwards.

During his illness, one Saturday morning when the preachers had met, as usual, to fix their labour for the ensuing week, and consult on the most

[1] *Methodist Magazine*, 1801, p. 164.

likely way to promote the increase of genuine godliness in the circuit, he desired we might all of us go into his room, that he might take what he thought his final leave of us here below. It was indeed an affecting time! We loved him as a father; and with the affection and tenderness of a parent he exhorted and charged us to preach the same truths we had received and delivered, to keep to the Methodist discipline, and above all to live near to God in prayer—adding, 'That gospel which I have preached in the best manner I was able I bless God I now find to be the power of God unto salvation. I know I have not followed a cunningly devised fable, but I have nothing to depend on but Christ:

> This all my hope, this all my plea,
> Jesus hath lived, hath died for me!

Yet I know that whatever I have done in the cause of Methodism I have done with a single eye to the glory of God and for the good of the body of preachers and people. I now expect soon to leave you. I love you all, and pray God to be with you and with all the Connexion.' We joined in prayer and praise, and he took leave of us in the most tender and friendly manner possible. When my wife was coming out of the room soon after, he held out his hand to her, and said, 'O Mrs. Wood, live for eternity: the Judge is at the door, and I rejoice that He is.'

The day following was a day of exquisite pain and affliction, and most of those who saw him thought he could not continue long; but he was happily resigned to the divine will, whether for

life or death. That evening, before preaching, Mr. Grant called to see him; to whom he said, when going into the chapel, 'Give my love to the people, and tell them I have not followed a cunningly devised fable: I now prove the word of truth to be the power of God to the salvation of my soul.'

I think it was about June 10 that, after a little respite, he was taken much worse. I sat up with him that night. He was delirious most of the time, and his short slumbers, during the intervals of ease, were soon followed by the most acute pain imaginable. But during the whole night all that he said, even when delirious, evidenced the piety and devotion of his heart. One thing I particularly marked with pleasure; namely, the grateful sense he had of every little attention shown him, however trifling and unworthy of notice. Indeed, this shone forth through the whole of his illness, and often did he express himself in the following manner: 'What abundant cause have I to praise God, that in this time of suffering I have every comfort and convenience in life, and above all an assurance that I shall be with Christ for ever!' Indeed, praise filled up the chief part of his time in his affliction.

His unwearied diligence in the work of the ministry, his kindness and fidelity as a friend, his tender sympathy with the poor and afflicted, his strict punctuality in keeping to time and performing of promises, his readiness to forgive the grossest affronts and overcome evil with good, and his deep piety towards God have

rendered his example highly worthy of imitation, and left an indelible impression of gratitude, affection, and esteem on the hearts of thousands to whom he had held forth the word of life. May I follow him as he followed Christ, and meet him when pain and parting shall for ever cease!

His Obituary in the *Minutes* for 1801 speaks of his exceedingly great usefulness 'as a father to the preachers, and as a steady supporter of all the branches of Christian discipline. Very numerous were his spiritual children whom he instrumentally brought to Jesus Christ and salvation; but his grand forte was the edifying of believers, and building up the Church of Christ—here he was always at home. He was, we may truly say, a blessing to all among whom he sojourned. He rose every morning at four o'clock, and could labour till nine at night without apparent fatigue, in duties which required the closest application. In conversation and debate he entered at once into the spirit of the business or subject in hand, and could instantly meet an objection with an appropriate reply. He was a perfect master of all the minutiae of the doctrines and discipline of Methodism. Hereby he was enabled, from a principle of duty and conscience, to afford Mr. Wesley very considerable assistance in the superintendence of the societies. His wisdom and experience, his courage and perseverance, rendered him an invaluable friend to our Connexion during some late troubles under which it suffered. He was never intimi-

dated through fear of calumny from pursuing those plans which he conceived to tend towards the peace and union of our societies. His noble soul was elevated above the momentary opinion of a party. He looked only at the interests and glory of the Redeemer's kingdom, and waited for his reward in a better world.'

JOHN MURLIN[1]

I WAS born in the parish of St. Stephen, in Cornwall, in the year 1722. I was mostly employed in the farming business till I was twelve years of age. My father died before I was thirteen, and I hope died in peace.

I was then desirous to learn the business of a carpenter, and accordingly, at Michaelmas, 1735, was bound apprentice to one. My master lived utterly without God in the world; he was much given to swearing and taking God's name in vain, and I too readily followed his bad example, and was much addicted to that vice.

At Michaelmas, 1742, my apprenticeship expired. I then wrought with another master three or four years, with whom I made some progress both in my business and in my learning, applying myself in the daytime to my trade and in the evening to writing and accounts. But all this time I was an enemy to God and to my own soul. Indeed, at times I had convictions of sin and some concern about my future state; but being surrounded by those who had no thought of God, and having no one to direct me, I quickly stifled my convictions and became worse than I was

[1] *The Arminian Magazine*, 1779, p. 530.

before. To cursing and swearing I soon added gaming, and soon after drunkenness. Lord, how great is Thy mercy in sparing those that live in open rebellion against Thee!

In February, 1749, I heard the Methodist preachers. I was soon brought under deep conviction on account of my numerous sins—the remembrance of them was grievous to me, the burden of them was intolerable. I grudged myself the food I ate; I thought a burned crust was too good for me. 'The arrows of the Almighty stuck fast in me, and His hand pressed me sore.' I frequently kneeled at my bedside and wrestled with God in prayer till midnight, and sometimes I was afraid to lie down in bed lest I should awake in hell. At other times I fell on the ground and roared for the very disquietness of my heart. Yea, and when I heard the preachers speak of the love of Christ, and of His willingness to save poor lost sinners, it fixed my convictions the deeper to think I should be such a rebel against so loving a Saviour.

In April I heard Mr. Downes[1] preach on part of the fifteenth chapter of St. Luke. Under this sermon I found a great deliverance. My burden was taken away, and from this day I never found that distress which I had felt before. But I was not fully satisfied that my sins were forgiven, though I read and prayed, and used all the other means of grace, at all opportunities.

I had now a calm serenity in my soul, and often

[1] John Downes, whom Wesley thought 'by nature full as great a genius as Sir Isaac Newton.'—*Journal*, November 4, 1774.

much peace and joy; but I wanted a clearer manifestation of the pardoning love of God. And this He was pleased to give me soon after, under the preaching of Richard Trather, a local preacher. I could then indeed say, 'Lord, Thine anger is turned aside, and Thou comfortest me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; He also is become my salvation.' And although since then I have met with sore trials, and sometimes have been brought very low, yet, blessed be God, I have never lost my confidence, and I trust I never shall.

Some time after this Mr. William Roberts, then the travelling preacher in our circuit, told me I must take care of the little class which met near the place where I lived. I was struck with fear, and went out of the room, telling him I could not undertake it. But he insisted upon it, and, as the people desired I should, I at last complied—and yet with fear and trembling, as I thought there were some in the class whose abilities were far superior to mine.

In order to qualify myself a little better for the employ, I bought a large Bible, with some other books, and applied myself to prayer and reading, chiefly the Holy Scriptures. And it pleased God to open my understanding more and more to see the wondrous things of His Word.

But about this time I was often beset by some disputatious Anabaptists, endeavouring to prove unconditional election. I asked them, 'Can this stand without absolute reprobation? And if God from eternity determined the end, namely,

the damnation of the reprobates, did He not also determine their sins, as the means to it? But in saying this do you not make God the author of all the sin that ever was committed? And, if so, is He not the author of all the sins of devils, as well as of men?'

I now met my class constantly, to whom I sometimes gave a word of exhortation, and I never found myself more happy than when I was among the children of God.

There were at this time in the neighbourhood several local preachers; but they had more places to preach at on a Sunday than they could possibly supply. One of them, Thomas Randall, came to me and said, 'The people are starving for want of bread, and can you withhold it from them? The Lord has put it into your hand; but you are not a good steward, otherwise you would dispense to all their portion of meat in due season.' His words made a deep impression on my mind; and though I put him off for the present, yet I could not shake off a continual fear lest I was burying my talent in the earth.

Some time after this preaching had been appointed at a neighbouring place, and no preacher was at liberty to go. I was in a strait, not knowing what to do. At length I came to this resolution, 'I will go this once, and see whether I am enabled to speak to the people or not; and then I shall be better satisfied, either to speak again or to be silent.' So I set out with a trembling heart. When I came to the place there were more people than the house would contain: this obliged them to carry out the stand. I got upon it with fear

and trembling, gave out a hymn, and went to prayer, wherein I found unexpected liberty. I then read those words, 'Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord' (Acts iii. 19). It pleased God to give me to speak with a free heart, and with a ready tongue. The people gave great attention to the word, and tears ran down many cheeks. I hope the good impressions were not soon effaced, for when I was last in Cornwall (in July, 1777), some of the people remembered what they heard that day.

Not long after I was appointed to labour in conjunction with several other local preachers. And though my abilities were not large, yet God gave me favour in the eyes of the people, and it pleased Him to make the plain words I spoke a blessing to many souls.

At this time the world began to smile upon me. Living with my mother, my board cost me nothing, I got much money at my business, and I had a rich uncle who always expressed a peculiar regard for me, and it was expected whenever he died he would leave me the greatest part of his substance. Being in so agreeable a situation in the midst of my Christian friends, I built me a house in the parish of St. Mewan, in order to fix my tabernacle.

Just then I received a letter from the Rev. Mr. Wesley, inquiring if I was willing to be a travelling preacher, and, if I was, desiring me to go into the west of Cornwall. I wrote back my objections: (1) that my aged mother desired I would

not leave her; (2) that not only my relations, but my Christian friends, were unwilling to part with me; and (3) that though I might be of some use among my neighbours, yet my abilities were not equal to so great a work. Mr. Wesley soon sent me a second letter, which fully answered all my objections. So, after a short struggle in my mind, I resolved to give up all for Christ; and accordingly, on October 12, 1754, I took my horse, and without delay rode away into the west of Cornwall.

I laboured in various parts of England from this time till September 15, 1756. Then I embarked with Captain Davis for Ireland, with four other preachers; two of whom, I trust, James Massiot and Nicholas Gilbert, are safe landed in Paradise.

The next year I embarked at Dublin with Lawrence Coughlan, landed at Parkgate, and rode up to the Conference in London. Thence I went to Whitehaven, where I was much blessed, both in my soul and in my labours. Here I met with a companion who for three or four years was inseparable from me. His name was Benjamin Biggs, a favourite servant of the late Sir James Lowther; with him I embarked in July, 1758, for Liverpool. But the captain deceived us, and carried us to the Isle of Man. Here we stayed a week. The second evening I preached in a large barn. But on Sunday it would not contain the congregation, so I was obliged to preach abroad. The people in general behaved well, and gave great attention. After I left them some of them sent to Whitehaven, desiring to

have another preacher. But it was some years before another preacher went, there being so little probability of doing any considerable good while the whole island was a nest of smugglers. The Duke of Athol was then king of the isle, but the case is now widely altered. Since it has been purchased[1] of the duke and united to the crown of England, that detestable trade is rooted out. A considerable part of the island is cultivated. At one part of it a herring-fishery is established; at another a large linen-manufactory. And we now see the fruit of our labours there in the conversion of many sinners to God.

From August, 1767, to August, 1768, I was in the Bristol Circuit. There was this year a very remarkable increase of the work of God in Kingswood. Above an hundred and sixty members were added to the society, and thirteen or fourteen children at the school were enabled to rejoice in God their Saviour. But which of these will endure to the end?

When I look back on the many years I have now spent in testifying the gospel of the grace of God, though I have not made that advancement in His ways which I might have done, yet I can say, to His glory, He hath so kept me that none can lay anything to my charge with regard to my moral conduct since God first spoke peace to my soul in April, 1749.

I am clearly convinced that God has called me to preach His everlasting gospel. And the more because it has pleased Him by His Spirit to confirm the word of His messenger. Indeed,

[1] In 1764 for £70,000.

I am fully persuaded that He does confirm the word of all whom He hath sent, by turning sinners, through them, 'from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.'

And I believe that Christ 'is able to save unto the uttermost all those that come unto God through Him.' I cannot credit them who are continually telling the people that the Canaanite must dwell in the land to humble them—that is, Belial must be a partner with Christ in His work; as though Christ was not sufficient to humble the souls of God's children without calling in sin and the devil to His assistance!

I bless God my heart is engaged in His work, and there is nothing gives me greater satisfaction than to hear of the prosperity of Sion. Yet how much longer I shall be able to travel I cannot tell, as I have a settled rheumatism in my knee and thigh, and am far past the meridian of life. But in all circumstances I have chosen God for my portion, and the lot of my inheritance for ever. He hath been my helper hitherto, and I trust He will help to the end. O Lord, forsake me not in my old age. Lay Thine everlasting arms beneath me, and give me a safe and comfortable passage through the valley of the shadow of death, and bring me to Thy holy hill, to praise Thy name for evermore!

Meantime, I bless God I can say to His glory I do find constant communion with Him. And I pay no regard to those who tell us, 'You must come from the mount, and you must not mind your frames and feelings.' No! If I have the peace of God, do I not feel it? If I do not feel

it, I have it not. And if I do not feel joy in the Holy Ghost, it does not exist. And shall I not feel it more and more if I go on from faith to faith, if I daily 'grow in grace' (as I trust I shall), 'and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ'? *August* 1, 1779.

Wesley calls him 'honest John Murlin.'[1] In 1781 he tells Joseph Benson, 'I think you can make verses as fast as John Murlin.'[2] When Wesley visited High Wycombe on October 16, 1788, he wrote, 'Mr. Murlin's settling here has been of great use. Here is now a steady and understanding people.'

In the Magazine for 1800, page 64, John Pawson gives some particulars of the life and ministry of his old friend. He writes:

He hath now finished his earthly course, and entered into the joy of his Lord; and as I was intimately acquainted with him for many years, I make no doubt but it will be acceptable to thousands who formerly attended his ministry to hear some farther account of him.

I first became acquainted with Mr. Murlin in 1765, when we laboured together in the Birstall Circuit. Afterwards we were stationed in London in 1770, in Bristol in 1771, in London again in 1779, in Bristol in 1781, and in Manchester in 1784, so that I knew him well. During all these years I saw nothing in him that I could reprove. His truly Christian temper, as well as his exemplary conduct, bore witness that he

[1] *Works*, xii. 142.

[2] Ibid. xii. 4. Murlin had this year published a small collection entitled *Sacred Hymns on Various Subjects*. By 1788 this had reached a third edition.

walked with God. The more I knew of him, the more fully I was satisfied of his sincerity, integrity, and uprightness of mind. He certainly had the glory of God and the salvation of souls very much at heart, or he would not have continued his public labours as an itinerant preacher so long as he did. I am inclined to think that very few who have it in their power, as he had, to retire and live comfortably upon the property which God has given them, would continue to struggle with the heavy afflictions which he endured, in travelling in all sorts of weather to preach the gospel; but he had an affecting view of what his Lord and Saviour had suffered for him, and was satisfied of his call to the ministry; he therefore resolved to labour in this blessed work till by hard necessity he should be obliged to leave it. About the year 1786, being no longer able to keep a circuit, he retired to High Wycombe, where he spent the remaining part of his days. Here he faithfully laboured in preaching the word of life, as opportunity and his strength would permit. The Lord made him a blessing to many, and he was much esteemed by the people.

Having been for many years greatly afflicted with a rheumatic complaint, the disorder continued to increase very much upon him, attended with such stiffness in his joints that it was with the utmost difficulty he could walk at all, or get up into the pulpit. But he bore all his afflictions with humble resignation, and patiently waited for that great and solemn change which the men of the world so much dread. Last winter he came to London, and preached, for the last time,

a very useful sermon in Great Queen Street Chapel, where I had the satisfaction to hear my long-tried and faithful friend once more bear a faithful testimony for his blessed Master. Soon after his return home (about February), at his earnest request I visited him, and found him in a dying state. He had had a stroke of the palsy, which deprived him of the use of all his limbs except his right hand, which he could use a little, and but a little. He was exceedingly happy in the love of God, waiting in joyful expectation of being speedily called to the full enjoyment of everlasting happiness. He wanted to settle a considerable sum of money for the benefit of that Society,[1] and when he had done this he could say, 'Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word.' It was a very affecting sight to see his amiable partner, on the one hand, quite turned into a child by a paralytic stroke; on the other hand, Mr. Murlin deprived of the use of all his limbs by the same disorder. Lord, what is man? How weak, how helpless! Who can tell what he may be called to suffer, or to what a low estate he may be reduced before he leaves this world? O how needful to improve our health and strength, and our understanding, while we are blessed with them! Helpless as he was, he had not much pain, but was very cheerful, and perfectly sensible. He said, 'I bless the Lord I have not the shadow of a doubt,' and added, before I left him, 'I begin to fear that death is not quite so near as I expected'; and so it proved, for he lived till July following [1799].

[1] The Methodist Society.

He conversed very freely with me respecting the state of our Connexion, and expressed the most affectionate concern for its prosperity. When I was coming away he called me back, and desired that I would take care of his corpse when he should be brought to London. This was done according to his request, and he was buried in the same vault with Mr. Wesley, at the City Road Chapel.

He bore his affliction (which greatly increased upon him) to the last with great patience, and continued innocently cheerful and exceedingly happy till it pleased God to sign his release and to call him to the regions of everlasting rest and peace.

Thus died Mr. John Murlin, having faithfully laboured in the vineyard of the Lord about forty-six years. Of him it might be said, 'Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile.' As I laboured with him six years, I knew him well, and think it my duty to bear this testimony of his uprightness, integrity, and zeal for the glory of God and salvation of precious souls, his diligence in the work unto which the Lord had called him, and his faithfulness in fulfilling the important duties of that high and honourable station in which Providence had placed him. He was a Methodist of the primitive stamp, in heart and life, in doctrine and discipline. He was an instrument in the Lord's hand of turning many to righteousness, for, as his heart was in the work, he was generally so deeply affected with the truths he delivered that he seldom could refrain from tears, and this frequently

had a good effect upon many of his hearers. During the time that we were stationed together we laboured in perfect harmony, and never had the smallest jar respecting anything; but the more intimately we were acquainted with each other, the more closely were we united in the bonds of Christian love. As he laboured long, and suffered much, so now he receives a full reward in the kingdom of immortal glory; and no doubt he has met with many in those peaceful regions who were brought to the knowledge of the truth by his ministry, who will be his crown of rejoicing for ever.

Thus we see one and another of our highly esteemed brethren gathered to their fathers in peace. May we follow them as they followed Christ, till we also finish our course with joy! So prays your affectionate friend and brother,

In the *Minutes* for 1799 Murlin is described as 'a primitive Methodist, a man of great integrity, sincerity, and simplicity, who was, in general, so deeply affected with the subjects on which he preached that he obtained the name of "the weeping prophet."'

His mural tablet in City Road Chapel is above the door leading to the vestry, and is surmounted by an urn. After referring to him as 'the weeping prophet,' it continues: 'Worn out by age, labour, and infirmities, he died as he had lived, full of faith and love, with a pleasing prospect of a glorious immortality.'

GEORGE SHADFORD[1]

I WAS born at Scotter, near Kirton-in-Lindsey, Lincolnshire, January 19, 1739. When I was very young I was uncommonly afraid of death. At about eight or nine years of age, being very ill of a sore throat, and likely to die, I was awfully afraid of another world; for I felt my heart very wicked, and my conscience smote me for many things that I had done amiss.

As I grew up I was very prone to speak bad words, and often to perform wicked actions. We lived by a river side, where a part of my cruel sport was to hurt or kill the poor innocent fowls. One day, seeing a large flock of ducks sitting close together, I threw a stick with great violence, killed one of them upon the spot, and was highly diverted at seeing it die, till I saw the owner of it come out of his house and threaten me severely. I was then sorely troubled, and knew not where to run. I knew I had sinned, and was greatly afraid lest it should come to my father's knowledge; therefore I durst not go home for a long time.

I was very prone to break the Sabbath, and, being fond of play, took every opportunity on

[1] *The Arminian Magazine*, 1790, p. 10.

Sunday to steal away from my father. In the forenoon, indeed, he always made me go to church with him, and when dinner was over he made me and my sister read a chapter or two in the Bible, and charged me not to play in the afternoon; but notwithstanding all he said, if any person came in to talk with him I took that opportunity to steal away, and he saw me not till evening, when he called me to an account.

I wished many times that the Rev. Mr. Smith, the minister of the parish, was dead, because he hindered our sports on the Lord's Day. One Sunday, finding me and several others at football, he pursued me near a quarter of a mile. I ran until I was just ready to fall down; but coming to a bank, over which I tumbled, I escaped his hands for that time. My conscience always troubled me for these sins; but having a flow of animal spirits, and being tempted of the devil, and drawn by my companions and evil desires, I was always carried captive by them.

My mother insisted on my saying my prayers every night and morning at least, and sent me to be catechized by the minister every Sunday. At fourteen years of age my parents sent me to the bishop to be confirmed, and at sixteen they desired me to prepare to receive the blessed sacrament. For about a month before it I retired from all vain company, prayed, and read alone, whilst the Spirit of God set home what I read to my heart. I wept much in secret, was ashamed of my past life, and thought I would never spend my time on Sundays as I had done. When I approached the table of the Lord it

appeared so awful to me that I was likely to fall down, as if I was going to the judgement-seat of Christ. However, very soon my heart was melted down like wax before the fire. These good impressions continued about three months. For I often thought, 'If I sin any more, I shall have eaten and drunk my own damnation, not discerning the Lord's body.'

I broke off from all my companions, and retired to read on the Lord's Day—sometimes into my chamber, at other times into the field, but very frequently into the churchyard, near which my father lived. I have spent among the graves two or three hours at a time, sometimes reading and sometimes praying, until my mind seemed transported in tasting the powers of the world to come. So that I verily believe had I been acquainted with the Methodists at that time I should have soon found remission of sins and peace with God. But I had not a single companion that feared God; all were light and trifling. Nay, I believe at that time the whole town was covered with darkness, and sat in the shadow of death.

Having none to guide or direct me, the devil soon persuaded me to take more liberty, and suggested that I had repented and reformed enough, that there was no need to be always so precise, that there were no young people in the town who did as I did, and that I might take a walk amongst them on Sundays in the afternoon without being wicked. I gave way to this fatal device of Satan, and, by little and little, lost all my good desires and resolutions, and soon became weak as in times past.

After this I became intimate with two young men that lived about a mile off, who were very often reading books that were entertaining to youth of a carnal mind—such as Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and his *Art of Love*, &c., which soon had a tendency to corrupt and debauch my mind. Now religious books became tasteless and insipid to me, my corruptions grew stronger and stronger, and, the blessed Spirit being grieved, my propensity to sin increased more than ever.

I was fond of wrestling, running, leaping, football, dancing, and such-like sports; and I gloried in them, because I could excel most in the town and parish. At the age of twenty I was so active that I seemed a compound of life and fire, and had such a flow of animal spirits that I was never in my element but when employed in such kind of sports.

About this time the Militia Act took place, and I thought I would learn the manual exercise; and, as we had no expectation of marching from home, it would be pretty employment for me at Easter or Whitsuntide. Four persons were allotted to serve in the militia at the place of my nativity. One of them, a young man, was much afraid to go. I asked him what he would give me to take his place. He thought at first I was only in jest; but when he saw I was in earnest he gave all I asked, which was seven guineas. When my parents heard I was enlisted they were almost distracted, especially my father. I was greatly afflicted in my mind when I saw my parents in such trouble on my account. At their desire, therefore, I went

back to undo what I had done, but to no purpose, so at the time appointed I was sworn in.

At the end of the year the militia was called off to Manchester, where we lay most of the winter. While we lay here I was taken ill of a fever, and found myself horribly afraid of death; but when I recovered my distress soon wore off again. One night, about nine o'clock, just as I was going to bed I heard the drums beat to arms. We soon understood that an express was come to town for our company to march immediately to Liverpool, and that Thurot[1] had landed at Carrickfergus, in Ireland. We were under arms immediately, marched all night, and arrived at Warrington about break of day and at Liverpool the next evening.

My chief concern now was for fear (if we should have an engagement) that my life and soul should be lost together, for I knew very well I was not prepared for death. The next summer we were quartered at Chester and Knutsford, and the winter following we lay at Gainsborough in Lincolnshire. This year I was often very miserable and unhappy. I well remember one day, when being exceedingly provoked by one of my comrades, I swore at him two bitter oaths by the name of God—a practice I had not been guilty of. Immediately I was, as it were, stabbed to the heart by a sword. I was sensible I had grievously sinned against God, and stopped directly. I believe I never swore another oath afterward.

[1] In February, 1760, he landed 600 men from the French fleet and took a few prisoners.

I was often tempted this year to put an end to my life; for it was a year of sinning, and a year of misery. I was afraid to stand by a deep river, lest I should throw myself in. If I was on the edge of a great rock, I trembled, and thought I must cast myself down, and therefore was obliged to retreat suddenly. When I have been in the front gallery at church I have many times been forced to withdraw backward, being horribly tempted to cast myself down headlong. It seemed as if Satan was permitted to wreak his malice upon me in an uncommon manner, to make me miserable; but, glory be to God, I was wonderfully preserved by an invisible hand in the midst of such dreadful temptations. At other times, when at prayer, or walking alone meditating, God hath graciously given me to taste of the powers of the world to come.

I always had a strong natural affection for my parents, and would do anything that was in my power for them. It happened, a little before I went from home in the militia, that my father was in some distress in temporal circumstances. This moved me much: I therefore gave him all the money I had received in order to go into the militia. Very frequently during my absence from them, when the minister read over the fifth commandment in the church, 'Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land,' &c., with tears in my eyes I have said, 'Lord, incline my heart to keep this law,' always believing a curse would attend disobedient, undutiful children.

When our company lay in quarters at Gains-

borough I went with a sergeant to the place where the Methodists frequently preached, which was the old hall belonging to Sir Nevil Hickman. We did not go with a design of getting any good for our souls, but to meet two young women (who sometimes frequented that place at one o'clock), in order to walk with them in the afternoon. When we came there we found the persons we wanted, but I soon forgot them after the preacher began public worship. I was much struck with his manner. He took out his hymn-book, and the people sang a hymn. After this he began to pray extempore, in such a manner as I had never heard or been used to before. I thought it to be a most excellent prayer. After this he took his little Bible out of his pocket, read over his text, and put it into his pocket again. I marvelled at this, and thought within myself, 'Will he preach without a book too?'

He began immediately to open the Scriptures, and compared spiritual things with spiritual in such a light as I had never heard before. I did not suppose he had very learned abilities, or that he had studied either at Oxford or Cambridge; but something struck me, 'This is the gift of God, this is the gift of God.' I thought it was the Lord's doing, and marvellous in my eyes.

The preacher spoke much against drunkenness, swearing, &c.; but I thought I was not much guilty of such sins. At last he spoke very closely against pleasure-takers, and proved that such were dead while they live. I thought, 'If

what he says be true, I am in a most dreadful condition.' I thought again, 'This must be true, for he proves it from the Word of God.' Immediately I found a kind of judgement-seat set up in my conscience, where I was tried, cast, and condemned; for I knew I had been seeking happiness in the pleasures of the world and in the creature all my days, not in the Creator and Redeemer of my soul, the only central point of bliss. I revolved over and over what I had heard, 'If this be Methodist preaching, I will come again'; for I received more light from that single sermon than from all that ever I heard in my life before.

I thought no more about the girls whom I went to meet, and found I had work enough to take care of my own soul. I now went every Sunday when there was preaching, at half-past one, to the same place, and continued so to do most of the time we lay at Gainsborough. It was not long before my comrades and acquaintance took notice of my religious turn of mind, and began to ridicule me. I was surprised at this; for I (ignorantly) thought, 'If I become serious, every one will love and admire.' I still continued to go to the preaching, till the soldiers and others having repeatedly reproached and laughed at me, I began to think I had not sufficient strength to travel to heaven, as I was connected with such a set of sinners.

I then made a vow to Almighty God that if He would spare me until that time twelvemonth (at which time I should be at liberty from the militia, and intended to return home), I would

then serve Him. So I resolved to venture another year in the old way, damned or saved. O what a mercy that I am not in hell! that God did not take me at my word, and cut me off immediately! From this time the Spirit of God was grieved, and consequently I was left to fall into sin as bad as or worse than ever.

After this we marched, and were quartered near Dartford, in Kent, where we continued eleven weeks. This place seemed to me the most profane for swearing, cursing, drunkenness, Sabbath-breaking, &c., that ever I saw in any part of England. I was so affected that I went to the minister of the parish and let him know what wretched work of drinking and fighting we had in the taverns in service-time on Sunday, and desired him to see to it. He did so, and strictly forbade any liquor to be sold during church-service for the future. It was at this place the Lord arrested me again with strong convictions, so that I was obliged to leave my comrades at noonday, and ran up into my chamber, where I threw myself upon my knees and wept bitterly. I thought, 'Sin, cursed sin, will be my ruin.' I was ready to tear the very hair from my head, thinking I must perish at last, and that my sins would sink me lower than the grave.

While I was in this agony in my chamber about noon, the landlady came into it as she was passing into her own, and found me upon my knees. I was not in the least ashamed. She said nothing to me then, but at night

took me to task, and asked me if I was a Wesleyan or Whitefieldite. I said, 'Madam, what do you mean? Do you reproach me because I pray! because I pray?' She paused. I said again, 'Madam, do you never pray to God? I think I never saw you at church, or any other place of worship, these ten weeks I have been at your house.' She answered, 'No, the parson and I have quarrelled, and therefore I do not choose to go to hear him.' I replied, 'A poor excuse, madam! And will you also quarrel with God?' Wherever I travelled I found the Methodists were everywhere spoken against by wicked and ungodly persons of every denomination; and the more I looked into the Bible, I was convinced that they were the people of God.

Our next route was to Dover, where we tarried a month. Here the soldiers laughed me out of the little form of prayer I had, for I used always to kneel down by the bedside before I got into it. This form I dropped, and only said my prayers in bed. Our next remove was to Gainsborough, Lincolnshire, where we abode the winter; and in spring went to Epworth, in which place I was discharged.

Soon after my arrival at home several young persons seemed extremely glad to see me, and proposed a dance to express their joy at our first meeting. Though I was not fond of this, yet, to oblige them, I complied, much against my conscience. We danced until break of day; and as I was walking from the tavern to my father's house (about a hundred yards) a thought

came to my mind, 'What have I been doing this night? Serving the devil!' I considered what it had cost me; and, upon the whole, I thought, 'The ways of the devil are more expensive than the ways of the Lord. It will cost a man more to damn his soul than to save it.' I had not walked many steps farther before something spoke to my heart, 'Remember thy promise.' Immediately it came strongly into my mind, 'It is now a year ago since that promise was made, "If Thou wilt spare me until I get home, I will serve Thee."' Then that passage of Solomon came to my mind, 'When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for He hath no pleasure in fools: pay that thou vowest.' I thought, 'I will. I will serve the devil no more.' But then it was suggested to my mind, 'Stay another year, until thou art married and settled in the world, and then thou mayest be religious.' That was directly followed with, 'If I do, God will surely cut me off and send my soul to hell, after so solemn a vow made.' From that time I never danced more, but immediately began to seek happiness in God.

A circumstance happened which tended to fix me in this resolution. Before I went into the militia I was somewhat engaged to a young woman that lived in Nottinghamshire; and when I was at Manchester I wrote to her, but received no answer, which much surprised me. After I returned home I went to see her, but found she was dead and buried. This shocked me very much. I desired a friend to show me the place where she was interred. When I came to it,

and was musing, I turned my eye to the left hand, and saw a new stone with this inscription :

> In bloom of youth into this town I came.
> Reader, repent ; thy lot may be the same.

I felt as if something thrilled through me. I read and wept, and read and wept again. I looked at the stone, and understood it was a young woman aged twenty-one. Upon inquiry, I found she had made great preparations, in gay clothing, in order to have a good dance, as she called it, at the fair held here. She talked much of the pleasure she expected before the time came. At last it arrived, and as she was tripping over the room with her companions, until twelve o'clock at night, she was suddenly taken ill. And, behold, how unexpected! O how unwelcome! death struck her. She was put immediately to bed, and never left it until brought to this spot to be buried. No one can conceive how I felt while I was meditating on the death of these two young women. The one I had tenderly loved. The other, although a stranger to me, had lived about two miles from the place of my nativity. 'Well,' thought I, 'a little while ago these were talking, walking pieces of clay, like myself ; but now they are gone to the house appointed for all living.' I wept, and turned my back ; but I never forgot that call to the day of my conversion to God.

At this time both my parents were taken very ill, which was cause of great trouble to me, for I was much afraid they would die. One day while I was greatly distressed about them, and

knew not what to do, at last it came into my mind, 'Go to prayer for them.' I went upstairs, shut myself in, and if ever I prayed in my life from my heart, I did it at this time. I remember in particular that I prayed to the Lord to raise them up again, and spare them four or five years longer. This prayer He graciously condescended both to hear and answer; for the one lived about four, the other near five, years afterward, and were truly converted to God.

I have looked upon it as a kind providence that brought a Methodist farmer to the place of my nativity while I was absent in the militia, who received the Methodist preachers, and had formed a little society just ready for me when I got home. I was now determined to seek happiness in God, and therefore went constantly to church and sacrament, and to hear the Methodist preachers, to pray, and read the Scriptures. I thought, 'I will be good. I am determined to be good.' But, alas! in about six or eight weeks, instead of being very good, I saw my heart was corrupt and nothing but sin. I read at night different prayers. Sometimes I prayed for humility or meekness, at other times for faith, patience, or chastity—whatever I thought I wanted most. I was thus employed, when the family were in bed, for hours together. And many times whilst reading the tears ran from my eyes, so that I could read no further; and when I found my heart softened, and could open it to Almighty God, there seemed a secret pleasure in repentance itself, with a hope springing up that God would save me and bestow His pardoning mercy.

While I was thus employed in seeking the Lord, and drawn by the Spirit of God, I esteemed it more than my necessary food.

A little after this I went to see an uncle at East Ferry, and as we were reading the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans he asked me if the latter part of that chapter belonged to St. Paul in his converted state. I said I could not tell. 'But if it was St. Paul's converted state,' I said, 'it is exactly mine. "For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me."' I then began to flatter myself, saying, 'Surely I am converted. I trust I am in a safe state.' And it is well if hundreds do not rest here.

But the Lord did not suffer me to take convictions for conversion. After those pleasant drawings, I had sorrow and deep distress. My sins pressed me sore, and the hand of the Lord was very heavy upon me. Thus I continued until Sunday, May 5, 1762. Coming out of church, the farmer that received the preachers told me a stranger was to preach at his house. I went to hear him, and was pleased and much affected. He gave notice that he would preach again in the evening. In the meantime I persuaded as many neighbours as I could to go. We had a full house, and several were greatly affected while he published his crucified Master. Toward the latter part of the sermon I trembled, I shook, I I wept. I thought, 'I cannot stand it: I shall fall down amidst all this people.' O how gladly

would I have been alone to weep! for I was tempted with shame.

I well remember he called out at last, and said, 'Is there any young man here about my age willing to give up all and come to Christ? Let him come, and welcome; for all things are now ready.' I thought before this he was preaching to me; but now I was sure he spoke to me in particular. I stood guilty and condemned, like the publican in the temple. I cried out (so that others might hear, being pierced to the heart with the sword of the Spirit), 'God be merciful to me a sinner!' No sooner had I expressed these words but by the eye of faith (not with my bodily eyes) I saw Christ, my Advocate, at the right hand of God, making intercession for me. I believed He loved me, and gave Himself for me. In an instant the Lord filled my soul with divine love, as quick as lightning—so suddenly did the Lord whom I sought come to His temple. Immediately my eyes flowed with tears and my heart with love. Tears of joy and sorrow ran mingled down my cheeks. O what sweet distress was this! I seemed as if I could weep my life away in tears of love. I sat down in a chair, for I could stand no longer. And these words ran through my mind twenty times over: 'Marvellous are Thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well.' I knew not then that these words were in the Scripture, until I opened on them in the Psalms when I got home.

As I walked home along the streets I seemed to be in Paradise. When I read my Bible it

seemed an entirely new book. When I meditated on God and Christ, angels or spirits, when I considered good or bad men, any or all the creatures which surrounded me on every side, everything appeared new, and stood in a new relation to me. I was in Christ a new creature; old things were done away and all things become new. I lay down at night in peace with a thankful heart, because the Lord had redeemed me, and given me peace with God and all mankind. I thought I never should be troubled with the sin that did most easily beset me, and said within myself, 'The enemies I have seen this day I shall see them no more for ever.' I felt the truth of those words:

> How happy are they
> Who the Saviour obey,
> And have laid up their treasure above!
> Tongue cannot express
> The sweet comfort and peace
> Of a soul in its earliest love.
>
> On the wings of His love
> I was carried above
> All sin, and temptation, and pain;
> I could not believe
> I ever should grieve,
> I ever should suffer again.

But no sooner had I peace within than the devil and wicked men began to roar without, and pour forth floods of lies and scandal in order to drown the young child. And no marvel; for the devil had lost one of the main pillars of his kingdom in that parish, and therefore he did not leave a stone unturned that he might cast an odium

upon the work of God in that place. But none of these things moved me, for I was happy, happy in my God; clothed with the sun, and the moon under my feet; raised up, and made to sit in heavenly, holy, happy places in Christ Jesus.

In a fortnight after I was joined in society. When I joined there were twelve in the society, chiefly old people. This was a little trial to me at first; but I thought it my duty to cast in my lot amongst them, for I was certain the Methodists, under God, were the happy instruments of my salvation. Therefore I knew I could not better recommend the good cause to others than by joining them, and letting my light shine before men that others might take knowledge I had been with Jesus. It is really marvellous that all who are awakened have not resolution enough heartily to unite in fellowship with the people of God. It is very rare that such make any progress. The blessed Spirit is grieved, and they remain barren and unfruitful. Were they faithful in obeying the Spirit of God, in taking up their cross, and setting an example to others, they might bring much glory to God, as well as obtain great peace and happiness to their own souls.

My greatest concern now was for my relations. I had a father and mother, sister and brother, all strangers to God. My father was sixty years old, and my mother near it. I scarcely ever went to the throne of grace without bearing them before the Lord in earnest prayer, and found great encouragement so to do. One night I took courage to speak to them, in as humble a

manner as I could, with respect to family prayer. I told them I believed they had brought us up in the fear of God as far as they knew, but we never had any family prayer. I added, 'If it is agreeable to you, I will endeavour to pray in the best manner I can.' On their consenting, we went into another room. I had not spoken many words in prayer before they were both in tears. When we arose from prayer we wept over one another; and what seemed to affect them most was to be taught by their child, when they ought to have taught me.

I continued to pray for them every night and morning for half a year. My father at length began to be in deep distress. I have listened, and heard him in private crying for mercy, like David out of the horrible pit and miry clay, 'O Lord, deliver my soul!' I began to reprove, exhort, and warn others wherever I came. My father was sometimes afraid if I reproved the customers who came to our shop it would give offence, and we should lose all our business. Upon which I said, 'Father, let us trust God for once with all our concerns, and let us do this in the way of our duty, from a right principle; and if He deceives us, we will never trust Him more: for none ever trusted the Lord that were confounded.' In less than a twelvemonth, instead of losing, we had more business than ever we had before.

I began now to pray in all our meetings, private and public; and the Lord mercifully heard, to the conviction and conversion of several, who were savingly brought to God, before I regularly

attempted to exhort or preach. I had then no notion of being a preacher. I only thought it my duty to do good, and all the good I could—to occupy or use my one talent until my Lord should come. I believed that was the religion of Jesus Christ, who went about doing good, and worked while it was day. Indeed, the love of God constrained me to speak. I had such a view of the fallen, miserable state of lost, perishing sinners that I thought if I could be an instrument of saving but one soul it would be worth all my pains, even all my life long. Our society increased from twelve to forty members in a short time, for the Lord gave me several of my companions in sin to walk with me in the ways of holiness.

The first time I exhorted was in the society. The class-leader put a hymn-book into my hand, and desired me to give a word of exhortation. The moment he did this I was seized with trembling, but instantly my soul was filled with the love and power of God. I believe the few simple words that I spoke were made a blessing, more or less, to every one there. An old man, one of the first converts in the town, advised me to give myself much to reading and prayer, for he believed God had some work for me to do. The preacher had appointed me to meet a class before this, which often proved both a cross and a blessing to my soul. I now exhorted my friends, neighbours, enemies, and whosoever fell in my way, to flee from the wrath which is to come.

One Sunday morning, as I was exhorting in the farmer's house, some word cut my father to

the heart. He fell back into the chair by which he stood, and wept, and was much distressed. On the evening of the same day he said to me, 'I know not what is the matter with me. I seem quite stupid and foolish—nay, I seem lost.' I answered, 'Then you will not be long before you are found. Father, you are not far from the kingdom of God. Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost.'

The next day, about twelve o'clock, I came into the room where he was sitting, with a Bible upon his knee. He was reading in the Psalms of David. I saw the tears running down his cheeks, yet there appeared a joy in his countenance. I said, 'Pray, father, what now? What now? What is the matter?' He instantly answered, 'I have found Christ; I have found Christ at last. Upwards of sixty years I have lived without Him in the world, in sin and ignorance. I have been all the day idle, and entered not into His vineyard till the eleventh hour. O how merciful was He to spare me, and hire me at last! He hath set my soul at liberty. O praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name!' I left him rejoicing in God his Saviour, and retired to praise God for answering my prayers.

My mother was convinced by hearing me and an old man converse about our souls together in private. She used to listen to our conversation, and the Lord showed her the state she was in. She had been a moral woman, and had the fear of God, so as to act conscientiously in what she

did as far as she knew. But when she was thoroughly awakened her convictions were very deep, so that many times, when I have been praying for her, she hath been like a person convulsed; at other times like a woman in labour, travailing through the pangs of the new birth. At last the Lord gave her an assurance of His pardoning love under the preaching of Mr. Samuel Meggot.[1]

About this time I went to see my sister, near Epworth, to inform her what the Lord had done for my soul. At first when I conversed with her she thought I was out of my mind, but at length hearkened to me. She told me a remarkable dream she had some time before, in which she had been warned to lay aside the vain practice of card-playing, which she had been fond of. After I had returned home she began to revolve in her mind what I had said, and thought, 'How can my brother have any view to deceive me? What interest can he have in so doing? Certainly my state is worse than I imagine. He sees my danger, and I do not. Besides, he seems to be another man; he does not look, or speak, or act as he used to do.' She therefore could not rest until she came to my father's house, and before she returned was thoroughly convinced she was a miserable sinner.

In a short time I visited her again, and asked her to go to hear Samuel Meggot preach. She heard him with great satisfaction. Afterward there was a love-feast, and she, being desirous to stay, at my request was admitted. As the

[1] See Wesley's *Journal*, June 7, 1763. He died in 1764.

people were singing a hymn on Christ's coming to judgement, she looked up, and saw all the people singing with a smile upon their countenance. She thought, 'If Christ was to come to judgement now, I shall go to hell, and they will all go to heaven.' Instantly she sunk down as if she was dying, and lay some time before she was able to walk home. She continued praying and waiting upon God for about a fortnight, when one day going to the well to fetch water (like the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well), she found the God of Jacob open to her thirsty soul His love, as a well of water springing up within her unto everlasting life; and as she returned from the well her soul magnified the Lord, and her spirit rejoiced in God her Saviour.

So merciful was the Lord to my family that four of them were brought to God in less than a year. My mother lived a happy witness of the love and favour of God three years, and died in great peace. My father lived upwards of four years, happy in God his Saviour, and used to say, 'Now I am a little child turned of four years old'—meaning (although near sixty-five) that he had never lived to any good purpose or to the glory of God before. About half a year before his death the Lord circumcised his heart so that I believe he loved God with all his heart, and received a constant abiding witness that the blood of Christ had cleansed him from all sin.

When he was taken ill I was preaching in Yorkshire, and as I returned home it was impressed upon my mind that my father was sick or dying. When I came near home I met

two friends, one of whom told me he believed my father lay a-dying. As soon as he saw me he was much affected, for he longed to see me before he died. He said to me, 'Son, I am glad to see thee; but I am going to leave thee—I am going to God, I am going to heaven.' I said, 'Father, are you sure of it?' 'Yes,' said he, 'I am sure of it. I know that my Redeemer liveth. Upward of four years ago the Lord pardoned all my sins, and half a year ago He gave me that perfect love that casts out all fear. At present I feel a heaven within me. Surely this heaven below must lead to heaven above.' When I perceived he was departing I kneeled down by him, and with fervent prayer commended his soul to God; and I praise His holy name that he died in the full assurance of faith.

My sister lived a faithful witness of the love of Jesus sixteen years. She was remarkable for faith and prayer, and enjoyed the perfect love of God several years before her death. She had eight or nine children; had nothing of this world's goods to leave them; but left them a good example, and sent up prayers to heaven for them, and wished more to see grace in their hearts than that she had thousands of gold and silver to leave them. She used to say to me, 'Brother, I believe all my children will be saved.' When I seemed to doubt it she answered, 'But I pray in faith, and whatsoever we ask in prayer, believing, we shall receive.' Her eldest daughter died before her a little, aged twenty-one, in the triumph of faith. And it is remarkable since her death her children, as they grow up, one

after another are convinced of sin, brought to God, and join the society.

I had a relation, Alice Shadford, who continued in earnest prayer for my conversion for twenty years, as she told me, and I believe that God heard and answered her prayers in my behalf. She was indeed a mother in Israel, lived a single life, and enjoyed the fear and love of God above fifty years. She died full of days, and full of grace, aged ninety-six years. I often think there is scarcely a person converted upon earth but it is in answer to some pious person's prayer, whom the Lord hath stirred up to plead for them.

I had many doubts of my call to preach at first. I knew it was my duty to do good in the little way I began with, but the important work of going forth publicly to call sinners to repentance made me tremble. After a great struggle in my mind, at last I resolved to make the trial. The first place I went to from home was a little place called Wildsworth. I believe there were not any there that knew God at that time. On Saturday night I continued three or four hours, until past midnight, in fervent prayer that the Lord might point out my way. On Sunday morning I set out to the little village alone—only I believed the Friend of sinners was with me. As soon as I came near there I gave notice of my errand, and quickly we had near a house full of people. In the first prayer I was much assisted, and some present began to drop tears. Under the preaching several appeared cut to the heart, and the Lord blessed His word to

many. As soon as I had done I gave notice that I would preach in the street at East Ferry. Several attended me thither, and when I had concluded I went home perfectly satisfied that God had called me to the work.

But very soon I was sadly discouraged, seeing my own ignorance, and feeling my weakness. I reasoned with myself and Satan until I thought the Lord required impossibilities — that He gathered where He had not strewed. I would go to preach His word, but He had not given me a talent sufficient for the important work. 'How happy,' thought I, 'are they in private capacity, who have nothing to do but to be faithful in their little sphere, and have not the charge of the souls of others!' I gave way to this kind of reasoning for a month, till at times I made myself almost as miserable as a demon. Then the Lord laid His chastening rod upon me, and afflicted me for a season, and showed me the worth of poor souls perishing in the broad way to destruction. After this I was made willing to go wherever He pleased to send me. So that when I began again to speak for Him His word was like the flaming sword, which turned every way to every heart; for sinners trembled and fell before it, and were both convinced and converted to God. I was often amazed at the condescension of God and His favour to me in all my weakness. I was like Gideon. I required token after token. As soon as the Lord made way, and opened a door in any place, I formed a society, and got the travelling preachers to take it under their care as soon as I could.

But by loud and long preaching, by walking more and farther than my strength could bear, by sitting up praying and reading many times until morning, I was soon worn down, and appeared to be in a swift decline. At last I fell into a severe fever that continued seven weeks, and I expected to die, as did most that saw me. I never had any affliction in which I enjoyed so much of the presence of God as this. He was with me every moment night and day. I continually saw Him who is invisible, and rejoiced in hope of the glory of God. O how did I desire to depart and to be with Christ! I had such views of my Father's house, the glory and happiness of that place, that I longed to be there. But one day as I was in bed, full of the love of God, I had a visionary sight of two prodigious fields, in which I saw thousands of living creatures praying and wrestling in different places, in little companies. It appeared to me that I must be employed in that work too, and must go to help them. Whilst I was considering what this could mean I took up my Bible, and opened on these words in the Psalms, 'Thou shalt not die, but live, and declare the work of the Lord.' I now believed I should recover, but was not so resigned to live as to die. I compared myself to a ship tossed upon the tempestuous ocean, for weeks and months together in great danger; at last I get in sight of the wished-for haven, when suddenly a contrary wind drives me back to sea again. From this time I began gradually to recover.

After this I preached occasionally for part of two years in the Epworth Circuit, and was en-

couraged by my friends, and by seeing the work of God prosper. When Mr. Wesley came into that part of the country he asked me if I was willing to give myself up wholly to the great work of saving souls from death. I replied that it was my desire so to do. Accordingly, at the Bristol Conference following I was appointed to labour in the west of Cornwall for the year 1768. This was a good year to me. I often wondered how the people could bear with my weakness; but the Lord owned His poor servant, and gave me to see the fruit of my labours. I was one day in great danger of losing my life, the first time I crossed Hale; but two men at a little distance suddenly called aloud, bidding me stop and come back. Had I gone a few yards farther, my horse and myself must inevitably have been swallowed up in a quicksand. I felt thankful, and went on admiring and adoring the watchful providence of God, my gracious and almighty Deliverer.

I was much affected this year with a remarkable instance of the sudden death of a backslider, who lived between Truro and Redruth. He had known the love of God, and walked circumspectly in the light of His countenance for seven years, and was diligent in every means of grace. But he began to give way to lightness and a trifling spirit. After this he refused to meet his brethren in band, and seldom met in class, until at length he entirely gave up both. He came to preaching sometimes, but began to be very free with his carnal neighbours, and shy with the people of God; till at last he fell into his old besetting sin, drunkenness, which he had con-

quered for seven years. One Sabbath Day he went with some carnal men to an ale-house, or gin-shop, and continued there until they all got drunk. At last they resolved to go home, though it was dark. Two of them lay down in the road; but the backslider was determined to go home alone; and as there were pits along the road-side about fifteen or twenty fathoms deep, he dropped into one of them and was crushed to death, leaving a wife and children in deep distress. Many were greatly affected at this alarming case, and some backsliders who were acquainted with him were stirred up to return to Him from whom they had revolted.

The next year I laboured in Kent with Mr. Jaco. God gave me spiritual children here also; it was indeed a very trying year, but very profitable to my own soul.

In 1770 I was sent to Norwich, and appointed to be the assistant, which was a great exercise of my mind, and hath been so ever since. We had a revival in Norwich, where several were converted to God. I went to Lynn occasionally this year, and stayed a fortnight or three weeks at a time, where the Lord blessed my labours, so that I joined thirty in society, of whom sixteen or eighteen had experienced the goodness of God to their souls.

After staying two years at Norwich I went to the Leeds Conference, where I first saw Captain Webb.[1] When he warmly exhorted preachers to

[1] Webb fought with Wolfe at Quebec. He preached in New York when on military duty there, and was one of the pioneers of Methodism in America.

go to America I felt my spirit stirred within me to go—more especially when I understood that many hundreds of precious souls were perishing through lack of knowledge, scattered up and down in various parts of the woods, and had none to warn them of their danger. When I considered that we had in England many men of grace and gifts far superior to mine, but few seemed to offer themselves willingly, I then saw my call the more clearly. Accordingly Mr. Rankin [1] and I offered ourselves to go the spring following, when I received a letter from Mr. Wesley informing me that I was to embark with Captain Webb at Bristol.[2]

When I arrived at Pill, where the ship lay, an awful dream I had six years before was brought to my mind. I thought in my sleep I received a letter from God, which I opened and read, the substance of which was as follows: 'You must go to preach the gospel in a foreign land, unto a fallen people, a mixture of nations.' I thought I

[1] Rankin says that when Wesley appointed him to take charge of the work in America 'I chose my much-esteemed friend and brother Shadford to accompany me to that continent. I had proved his uprightness, piety, and usefulness in several circuits where he had laboured with me, and I knew I could depend upon him.'—*Early Methodist Preachers*, v. 184; see also 206-8.

[2] The letter (*Works*, xii. 457) runs: '1773. DEAR GEORGE, the time is arrived for you to embark for America. You must go down to Bristol, where you will meet with Thomas Rankin, Captain Webb, and his wife. I let you loose, George, on the great continent of America. Publish your message in the open face of the sun, and do all the good you can. I am, dear George, yours affectionately, JOHN WESLEY.' Dr. Abel Stevens calls Shadford 'one of the heroes of American as well as of English Methodism.'—*History of Methodism*, ii. 183.

was conveyed to the place where the ship lay, in which I was to embark, in an instant. The wharf and ship appeared as plain to me as if I were awake. I replied, 'Lord, I am willing to go in Thy name; but I am afraid a people of different nations and languages will not understand me.' An answer to this was given: 'Fear not, for I am with thee.' I awoke, awfully impressed with the presence of God upon my mind, and was really full of divine love, and a relish of it remained upon my spirit for many days. I could not tell what this meant, and revolved these things in my mind for a long time. But when I came to Pill, and saw the ship and wharf, then all came fresh to my mind. I said to brother Rankin, 'This is the ship, the place, and the wharf which I saw in my dream six years ago.' All these things were a means of strengthening and confirming me that my way was of God.

We took leave of our native land, and set sail on Good Friday, often singing in our passage these words:

> The watery deep I pass,
> With Jesus in my view;

and after a comfortable passage of eight weeks we arrived safe at Philadelphia, where we were kindly received by a hospitable and loving people. In a few days I crossed the River Delaware, and went to Trenton; and laboured in the Jerseys with success for a month, adding thirty-five to the society, many of whom were much comforted with the presence of the Lord.

In my tour through the Jerseys, coming to a

place called Mount Holly, I met John Brainerd, brother to the devoted pious David Brainerd, missionary to the Indians. He appeared to be a very humble, serious man. He heard me preach twice in his preaching-house in that place, and asked me to go to an Indian town which lay twenty miles from thence, and said he would collect together all the Indians and white people he could from different parts. I fully purposed in my mind to go the first opportunity; but being suddenly called to labour at New York, was prevented. We conversed about two hours very profitably about his brother David and the Indians he had the care of, about Methodism and inward religion. He heartily wished us good luck, and said he believed the Lord had sent us upon the continent to revive inward religion amongst them.

One day a friend took me to see a hermit in the woods. After some difficulty we found his hermitage, which was a little place like a hogsty, built of several pieces of wood, covered with bark of trees, and his bed consisted of dry leaves. There was a narrow beaten path about twenty or thirty yards in length by the side of it, where he frequently walked to meditate. If one offered him food he would take it, but if money was offered him he would be very angry. If anything was spoken to him which he did not like he broke out into a violent passion. He had lived in this cell seven cold winters; and after all his prayers, counting his beads, and separating from the rest of mankind, still corrupt nature was all alive within him. Alas! alas! what will

it avail us whether we are in England or Ireland, Scotland or America, whether we live amongst mankind or retire into a hermitage, if we still carry with us our own hell, our corrupt evil tempers? The devil will only laugh at us, while we are strangers to true repentance and living faith in the blood of the Redeemer. It is this alone that can remove our guilt, purify the soul, and give us victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil, and make us comfortable in our own souls and useful to others. As no man lighteth a candle and putteth it under a bushel, so neither doth God bestow upon us any talent to hide it in the earth, in a cave, or cell.

My next remove was to New York, where I spent four months with great satisfaction. I went thither with fear and trembling, and was much cast down from a sense of my unworthiness and inability to preach the gospel to a polite and sensible people. But the Lord, who hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the things which are wise, and weak things to confound the things which are mighty, condescended to make use of His poor weak servant for the revival of religion at that city. I added fifty members in those four months, about twenty of whom found the pardoning love of God, and several backsliders were restored to their first love. A vehement desire was excited in the hearts of believers after all the mind of Christ, or the whole image of God. I left in New York two hundred and four members in society.

I had a very comfortable time for four or five

months that I spent in Philadelphia with a loving, teachable people. The blessing of the Lord was with us of a truth, and many were really converted to God. There was a sweet, loving spirit in this society, for nothing appeared amongst them but peace and brotherly love. They had kept prayer-meetings in different parts of the city for some time before I went to it, which had been a great means of begetting life amongst the people of God as well as others. I left in society, when I went from this place, two hundred and twenty-four members.

A remarkable circumstance happened just as I was leaving Philadelphia. When I went to the inn where my horse was, and had just entered into the yard, I observed a man fixing his eyes upon me, and looking earnestly until he seemed ashamed, and blushed very much. At length he came up to me, and abruptly said, 'Sir, I saw you in a dream last night. When I saw your back, as you came into the yard, I thought it was you; but now that I see your face, I am sure you are the person. I have been wandering up and down this morning until now seeking you.' 'Saw me in a dream,' said I: 'what do you mean?' 'Sir,' said he, 'I did. I am sure I did. And yet I never saw you with my bodily eyes before. Yesterday in the afternoon I left this city, and went as far as Schuylkill river, intending to cross it; but began to be very uneasy, and could not go over it: I therefore returned to this place, and last night, in my sleep, saw you stand before me; when a person from another world bade me seek for you until I found you,

and said you would tell me what I must do to be saved. He said also that one particular mark by which I might know you was that you preached in the streets and lanes in the city.' Having spoken this, he immediately asked, 'Pray, sir, are not you a minister?' (By which name they frequently call the preachers in America.) I said, 'Yes, I am a preacher of the gospel; and it is true that I preach in the streets and lanes of the city, which no other preacher in Philadelphia does. I preach also every Sunday morning at nine o'clock in Newmarket.' I then asked him to step across the way to a friend's house, where I asked him from whence he came. He answered, 'From the Jerseys.' I asked, had he any family. He said, 'Yes, a wife and children.' I asked where he was going. He said he did not know. I likewise asked, 'Does your wife know where you are?' He said, 'No. The only reason why I left home was I had been very uneasy and unhappy for half a year past, and could not rest any longer, but must come to Philadelphia.'

I replied, 'I first advise you to go back to your wife and children, and take care of them by obeying God in the order of His providence. It is unnatural to leave them in this manner, for even the birds of the air provide for their young. Secondly, you say you are unhappy: therefore the thing you want is religion, the love of God, and of all mankind—righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. When this takes possession of your heart, so as to destroy your evil tempers, and root out the love of the world, anger, pride, self-will, and unbelief, then

you will be happy. The way to obtain this is, you must forsake all your sins, and heartily believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. When you return to the Jerseys, go to hear the Methodist preachers constantly, and pray to the Lord to bless the word, and if you heartily embrace it you will become a happy man.'

While I was exhorting him the tears ran plentifully from his eyes. We then all kneeled down to pray; and I was enabled to plead and intercede with much earnestness for his soul, and to commend them all to God. When we arose from our knees I shook him by the hand: he wept much, and had a broken heart, but did not know how to part with me. He then set out to go to his wife in the Jerseys, and I for Baltimore, in Maryland, and I saw him no more; but I trust I shall meet him in heaven.

I cannot but remark here that God sometimes steps out of the common way of His providence to help some souls—especially a poor ignorant person who wants to serve Him, but knows not how, and hath a degree of His fear. When such persons pray sincerely to the Lord He will direct, by His providence, to some person or book, to some means or other, by which they may be instructed and brought to the knowledge of the truth.

That night I preached at Chester, and in two days I arrived on the borders of Maryland. I then crossed Susquehannah River, and preached to a loving congregation of blacks and whites, who were remarkably affected; and the next day at Deer Creek, to a large company of negroes

and others. I had hurt my leg by a fall, and was obliged to preach sitting; but the Lord made His word spirit and life to the people.

Soon after this I came to Baltimore, where I had not been many weeks before a young man came to me with two horses and entreated me to go to his father's house, about four miles from Baltimore, to visit his poor distressed brother, who was chained in bed, and whose case they did not understand, supposing him to be mad, or possessed with a devil. When I entered the room I found the young man in the depth of despair. I told him Christ died for sinners, that He came to seek and to save lost sinners—yea, that He received the chief of sinners; and added, 'There is no other name given under heaven, whereby men can be saved, but in and through our Lord Jesus Christ.' The young man laid hold of those words, 'The name of Jesus Christ,' and said he would call upon Jesus Christ as long as he lived; and found some little hope within him, but knew no more how he must be saved than an Indian.

I sang a verse or two of a hymn, and then his father, and mother, and brethren joined me in prayer. The power of God was amongst us of a truth: we had melted hearts and weeping eyes, and indeed there was a shower of tears amongst us. I know not when I have felt more of the divine presence, or power to wrestle with God in prayer, than at this time. After we rose from our knees I gave an exhortation, and continued to go to preach in their house every week or fortnight for some time. They loosed the young

man that was bound—and the Lord shortly after loosed him from the chain of his sins, and set him at perfect liberty. He soon began to warn his neighbours, and to exhort sinners to flee from the wrath which is to come; and before I left the country he began to travel a circuit, and was remarkably successful. I followed him in Kent in Delaware; and verily believe he was instrumental in awakening a hundred sinners that year.

I was appointed the next year for Virginia, and was much dejected in spirit. I often felt much of this before a remarkable manifestation of the power and presence of God. In preaching and prayer the Lord strips and empties before He fills. I saw myself so vile and worthless as I cannot express, and wondered that God should employ me in His work. I was amazed when I first began to preach in Virginia, for I seldom preached a sermon but some were convinced and converted, often three or four at a time. I could scarcely believe them when they told me.

Among these was a dancing-master, who came first to hear on a week-day dressed in scarlet, and came several miles again on Sunday dressed in green. After preaching he spoke to me, and asked if I could come to that part where he lived some day in the week. I told him I could not, as I was engaged every day. I saw him at preaching again that week, and another man of his profession. When I was going to preach one morning a friend said to me, 'Mr. Shadford, you spoiled a fine dancing-master last

week. He was so cut under preaching, and feels such a load of sin upon his conscience, that he moves very heavily—nay, he cannot shake his heels at all. He had a large profitable school, but hath given it up, and is determined to dance no more. He intends now to teach reading, writing, and arithmetic.' I said, 'It is very well.' What is his name?' He said, 'He is called Madcap.' I said, 'A very proper name for a dancing-master'; but I found that this was only a nickname, for his real name was Metcalf. He began to teach a school, joined our society, found the guilt and load of sin removed from his conscience and the pardoning love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost given unto him. He lived six or seven years after, and died a great witness for God, having been one of the most devoted men in our Connexion.

Going to preach one day, I was stopped by a large flood of water, and could not come at the bridge. I therefore turned back about half a mile to a large plantation; and having found the planter, I told him my case, and asked if I could sleep at his house. He said I was welcome. After I had taken a little refreshment I asked if that part of the country was well inhabited; and on his answering in the affirmative, I said, 'If it is agreeable, and you will send out to acquaint your neighbours, I will preach to them in the evening.' He sent out, and we had many hearers, but they were as wild as boars. After I reproved them they behaved very well under preaching. When I conversed with the planter

and his wife I found them entirely ignorant of themselves and of God. I laboured to convince them both, but it seemed to little purpose. Next morning I was stopped again, when he kindly offered to show me a way, some miles about, and go with me to preaching. I thanked him, and accepted his offer. As I was preaching that day I saw him weeping much. The Spirit of God opened the poor creature's eyes, and he saw the wretched state he was in. He stayed with me that night, and made me promise to go again to preach at his house. In a short time he and his wife became deep penitents, and soundly converted by the power of God. A very remarkable work began from that little circumstance, and before I left Virginia there were sixty or seventy raised up in society in that settlement. There were four travelling preachers that year in the circuit. We added eighteen hundred members, and had good reason to believe that a thousand of them were converted to God.

The spirit of the people began now to be agitated with regard to politics. They threatened me with imprisonment when I prayed for the king; took me up, and examined me, and pressed me to take the test-oath to renounce him for ever. I thought then I had done my work there, and set out, after I had been a year and a half amongst them, for Maryland. But it being in the depth of winter, I was one night lost in the woods when it was very cold and the snow a foot deep on the ground. I could find no house, nor see any traveller, and I knew I must perish if I continued there all night. I alighted from my

horse, kneeled down upon the snow, and prayed earnestly to God to direct me. When I arose I believed I should have something to direct me. I stood listening a short space, and at last heard a dog barking at some distance; so I followed the sound, and after some time found a house and plantation.

The next summer and winter I spent in Maryland—the winter on the eastern shore, where I could labour and be at peace; but as the test-oath must take place there also, I was brought to a strait. I had sworn allegiance to the king twice, and could not swear to renounce him for ever. I dare not play with fast-and-loose oaths, and swallow them in such a manner. We could not travel safe without a pass, nor have a pass without taking the oaths.

At our Quarterly Meeting I said to brother Asbury, 'Let us have a day of fasting and prayer, that the Lord may direct us, for we never were in such circumstances as now since we were Methodist preachers.' We did so, and in the evening I asked him how he found his mind. He said he did not see his way clear to go to England. I told him I could not stay, as I believed I had done my work here at present, and that it was as much impressed upon my mind to go home now as it had been to come over to America. He replied, 'Then one of us must be under a delusion.' I said, 'Not so; I may have a call to go, and you to stay'; and I believed we both obeyed the call of Providence. We saw we must part, though we loved as David and Jonathan. And indeed these times made

us love one another in a peculiar manner. O, how glad were we to meet and pour our grief into each other's bosom!

Myself and another set off, having procured a pass from a colonel to travel to the general; and arriving at the head quarters, we inquired for General Smallwood's apartments. Being admitted to his presence and asked our business, we told his excellency that we were Englishmen, and both Methodist preachers; and as we considered ourselves subjects of Great Britain, we could not take the test-oaths, therefore we should be very glad to return home to our native land. 'We cast ourselves,' we added, 'wholly upon your excellency's generosity, and hope, as you profess to be fighting for your liberties, you will grant us a pass to have liberty to return to our own land in peace.' He answered roughly, 'Now you have done us all the hurt you can, you want to go home.' I told him our motive had been to do good: for this end we left our own country, and had been travelling through the woods for several years, to seek and to save that which was lost. It was true we could not beat the political drum in the pulpit, preaching bloody sermons, because we considered ourselves messengers of peace, and called to preach the gospel of peace. At last he told us he would give us a pass to the English if we would swear we would go directly to Philadelphia, and from thence embark to Great Britain. He then swore us, and generously gave us our liberty without any further trouble.

That evening, however, I was in great danger

of losing my life. A man leaped from behind a bush with his gun loaded, cocked, and presented at my breast, and swore like a fiend, and said if I did not stop I should be a dead man, and called out as if he had more men in ambush. I stopped, and said very boldly, 'Where are your men? If you will take us, let them come up.' He swore again if I did not dismount he would shoot me dead upon the spot. I dismounted, and said boldly to him again, 'You have no right to stop me; I have a pass from the general.' All this while he had his piece at my breast, yet I had no fear or dread; but I have often thought since what a mercy it was that the piece did not go off while he kept me so long at the end of it. At last he was struck with fear; and as no one came to his help, and we were two, and he did not know but we might have pistols, he said, 'I will drop my gun if you will not hurt me.' I said, 'I have not threatened to hurt you; I do not want to hurt a hair of your head. But why do you stop me on the road, and threaten my life, when I told you I had a pass from the general?' The fellow seemed ashamed and confounded. If he had any design to rob us, his heart failed him; and the Lord delivered us out of his hands.

We left our horses at a poor little inn (for they had taken down the end of the large bridge that goes into Chester), and with our saddle-bags upon our backs we crept on our hands and knees on a narrow plank to that part of the great bridge that remained standing, and got our horses over the next morning. Thus, through the mercy

and goodness of God, we got safe into Chester that night, and the next night into Philadelphia. Here we met three or four of our preachers, who, like ourselves, were all refugees. I continued near six weeks before I got a passage, and then embarked for Cork in Ireland; from thence to Wales, and then crossed the passage to Bristol. I felt a very thankful heart, when I set my foot on English ground, in a land of peace and liberty, where was no alarm of war and bloodshed. They who have never been sick do not properly know the value of health. Neither are we in this land sufficiently thankful for the laws which protect our persons and property; and, above all, for our religious liberty to worship God according to our conscience, in the beauty of holiness.

I have received abundant mercies from a kind and indulgent Father since I came home; but have made small returns for them all, and feel greatly ashamed of myself, and deeply humbled for my coming short and living beneath my privilege for years that are past. I am now determined, through grace, to give my whole heart to God more than ever, to be more constant and regular in my walk, and to cast all my care upon Him who careth for me.

Last year indeed was a year of afflictions and trials to me. I was poorly in body most of the year, often very unable to travel, and sometimes had thoughts of desisting on that account. But, I bless God things are changed: it seems as if the Lord hath given me a new commission, and added strength to body and mind. Since I came

into the Kent Circuit I set apart some hours in order to pray that God might deepen the work of grace in my own soul, and make me more useful to others. He soon heard and answered, and hath brought my soul into such a liberty and fellowship with Himself that He is always present. There is no time when my Beloved is absent by day or by night; neither do I feel that propensity within me to sin as before. 'As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after God; yea, thirsteth for the living God.'

I see more than ever the preciousness of time, and the wisdom of improving it to the best purposes: the living every moment for God, the buying up every opportunity; the necessity of being more spiritual in my conversation, in order to grow in grace; the talking in company not about worldly things, but about our souls, God and Christ, heaven and eternal glory. O, how sad a case is it when we go to visit, to eat and drink with our friends, and say nothing, or that which is next to nothing, about their souls! If we had more of God in our hearts, there would be more of Him on our tongues and shining in our lives; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. We should be often speaking, reproving sin, and labouring to bring souls to God when we are out of the pulpit, as well as when we are in. Lord, make me more faithful in this, and in every respect, than ever I have been, for Christ's sake! Amen.

GEORGE SHADFORD.

CANTERBURY, *October* 15, 1785.

The latter part of his course is described by the Rev. John Riles:[1]

Mr. Shadford prayed and preached till disease and infirmity arrested him in his career. After having travelled for twenty-three years he became a supernumerary; but instead of burying himself in obscurity, or sinking into indolence, he evinced the same unabated love for the souls of men and the prosperity of the Church of God which he had done during the vigour of his health. He neither outlived his piety nor his usefulness. It was evident to all who had an intimate acquaintance with him that he enjoyed communion and fellowship with God, and was ripening for eternal glory. The members of his two classes had a high opinion of his piety, and, when assembled round him, hung upon his lips, eagerly expecting some word of instruction or comfort; for they had no doubt that God would make him an honoured instrument for their good. His method of meeting his classes was remarkably conciliating: there was nothing rough or austere in his manner; he blended the most benevolent feelings with faithfulness, and never appeared satisfied unless all the people under his care loved God with all their hearts, with all their strength, and with all their might. To these his advice was, 'Grow in grace.'

On Monday, February 28, Mr. Shadford dined with his affectionate friend Mr. Blunt, in company with his brethren. He then appeared in tolerable health, and ate a hearty dinner. In the course

[1] *Methodist Magazine*, 1816, p. 651.

of the week he felt indisposed, from a complication of diseases. He was under no apprehension at this time that his departure was so near, as he had frequently felt similar affections, and by timely applications to his medical friend, Mr. Bush, had been relieved. On Friday, March 1, he with some difficulty met his class, and afterwards said it was impressed on his mind that he should never meet it more. On the Sunday afternoon I called to inquire about his health, when he said with unusual fervour:

> To patient faith the prize is sure;
> And all that to the end endure
> The cross, shall wear the crown.

His mind seemed fully occupied with the great and interesting realities of eternity, and he had no greater pleasure than in meditating and talking of the dying love of Christ. On the Lord's day morning, March 10, before I went to the chapel, I called to see him, and found he had slept most of the night; from this we flattered ourselves the complaint had taken a favourable turn, and were in hopes of his recovery. But when the doctor called he said the disease was fast approaching to a crisis, and it was impossible for him to recover. Upon this information Mr. Shadford broke out in a rapture, and exclaimed, 'Glory be to God!' Upon the subject of his acceptance with God, and assurance of eternal glory, he had not the shadow of a doubt. While he lay in view of an eternal world, and was asked if all was clear before him, he replied, 'I bless God it is'; and added, 'Victory, victory, through

the blood of the Lamb!' When Mrs. Shadford was sitting by him he repeated, 'What surprise! what surprise!' I suppose he was reflecting upon his deliverance from a corruptible body, and his entrance into the presence of his God and Saviour, where every scene surpasses all imagination, and the boldest fancy returns weary and unsatisfied in its loftiest flights. Two friends, who were anxious for his recovery, called upon him; and when they inquired how he was, he replied, 'I am going to my Father's house, and find religion to be an angel in death.' A pious lady in the course of the day was particularly desirous of seeing him, and she asked him to pray for her. He inquired, 'What shall I pray for?' She said, 'That I may meet you in heaven, to cast my blood-bought crown at the feet of my Redeemer.' He said with great energy, 'The prize is sure.' His pious sayings were numerous, and will long live in the recollection of many; but a collection of them all would swell this article beyond due limits. His last words were, 'I'll praise, I'll praise, I'll praise!' and a little after he fell asleep in Jesus, on March 11, 1816, in the seventy-eighth year of his age.

For nearly fifty-four years Mr. Shadford had enjoyed a sense of the divine favour. His conduct and conversation sufficiently evinced the truth of his profession. For many years he had professed to enjoy that perfect love which excludes all slavish fear; and if Christian tempers and a holy walk are proofs of it, his claims were legitimate. Maintaining a humble dependence upon the merits of the Redeemer, he steered clear

of both Pharisaism and Antinomianism: his faith worked by love. Truly happy himself, there was nothing forbidding in his countenance, sour in his manners, or severe in his observations. His company was always agreeable, and his conversation profitable. If there was anything stern in his behaviour, it was assumed to silence calumniators and religious gossips. In short, he was a man of prayer and a man of God.

His abilities as a preacher were not above mediocrity, yet he was a very useful labourer in the vineyard of the Lord. In illustrating the doctrines of the gospel, he was simple, plain, and clear. His discourses, though not laboured, were methodical, full of scriptural phraseology, delivered with pathos, and accompanied with the blessing of God. He did not perplex his hearers with abstruse reasoning and metaphysical distinctions, but aimed to feed them with the bread of life; and instead of sending them to a dictionary for an explanation of a difficult word, he pointed them to the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.

Mr. Shadford was free and generous. His little annual income, managed with a strict regard to economy, supplied his wants, and left a portion for the poor and needy. In visiting the sick, while he assisted them by his prayers and advice, he cheerfully administered to their wants. He spent no idle time in needless visits and unmeaning chit-chat; and though many of his friends in Frome would have considered it a high favour if he could have been prevailed upon to partake of their bounty, yet he always

declined it, except once a week at the hospitable table of his generous friend, Mr. Blunt, where he generally met the preachers with some part of their families. He loved his brethren in the ministry; and, like an old soldier who had survived many a campaign, he felt a pleasure in retracing the work of God in which he had been engaged for more than half a century. He claimed it as a right, and deemed it a privilege, to have the preachers to take tea with him every Saturday afternoon. There was nothing sordid in his disposition, and, as far as I could ever observe, covetousness formed no part of his character. He considered the rule of his Saviour as having a peculiar claim upon his attention: 'Lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven.'

His patience and resignation to the will of God were such that he has left few superior in those passive graces. Some years since he lost his eyesight, and continued in this state of affliction for several years; but instead of murmuring at this dispensation of Providence, he bore it with Christian fortitude. This did not altogether prevent his usefulness; for, though the sphere of his action was circumscribed by it, he could still pray with the afflicted, converse with the pious, and meet several classes in the week. In this state he was advised to submit to an operation for the recovery of his sight. The trial proved successful; and when the surgeon said, 'Sir, now you will have the pleasure of seeing to use your knife and fork,' Mr. Shadford feelingly replied, 'Doctor, I shall have a greater pleasure: that of seeing to read my Bible.' This luxury he enjoyed; for

when he was permitted to use his eyesight, the first thing he did was to read the Word of Life for three hours, reading and weeping with inexpressible joy. During the whole of his last short illness he betrayed no symptoms of uneasiness, but cheerfully submitted to the will of God. Through the last few years of his life he glided smoothly down the stream of time. The assiduous attention of Mrs. Shadford to all his wants, her sympathy in the moments of pain, and unwearied attempts either to prevent his sufferings or lessen their force greatly tended to soften them down. She has lost a pious and an affectionate husband, and the Methodist society in Frome one of its best members.

RICHARD WHATCOAT[1]

I WAS born in the year 1736, in the parish of Quinton, in the county of Gloucester. My father dying while I was young left a widow and five children. At thirteen years old I was bound apprentice and served for eight years. I was never heard, during this time, to swear a vain oath, nor was ever given to lying, gaming, drunkenness, or any other presumptuous sin, but was commended for my honesty and sobriety. And from my childhood I had, at times, serious thoughts on death and eternity.

I served the greatest part of my apprenticeship at Darlaston, in Staffordshire; but at the age of twenty-one I removed from thence to Wednesbury. Here I found myself in continual danger of losing the little religion I had, as the family in which I lived had no religion at all. Therefore I took the first opportunity that offered of removing to another place, and a kind Providence directed me to a family that feared God and wrought righteousness.

I soon went with them to hear the Methodists, which I did with deep attention; and when the preacher was describing the fall of man I thought

[1] *The Arminian Magazine*, 1781, p. 190.

he spoke to me in particular, and spoke as if he had known everything that ever was in my heart. When he described the nature and fruits of faith I was conscious I had it not; and though I believed all the Scripture to be of God, yet I had not the marks of a Christian believer. And I was convinced that if I died in the state wherein I was I should be miserable for ever. Yet I could not conceive how I that had lived so sober a life could be the chief of sinners. But this was not long; for I no sooner discovered the spirituality of the law, and the enmity that was in my heart against God, than I could heartily agree to it.

The thoughts of death and judgement now struck me with terrible fear. I had a keen apprehension of the wrath of God, and of the fiery indignation due to sinners; so that I could have wished myself to be annihilated, or to be the vilest creature, if I could but escape judgement. In this state I was when one told me, 'I know God for Christ's sake has forgiven all my sins, and His Spirit witnesseth with my spirit that I am a child of God.' This gave me a good deal of encouragement. And I determined never to rest until I had a testimony in myself, that my sins also were forgiven. But in the meantime, such was the darkness I was in, such my consciousness of guilt, and the just displeasure of Almighty God, that I could find no rest day or night, either for soul or body. So that life was a burden, and I became regardless of all things under the sun. Now all my virtues, which I had some reliance on once, appeared as filthy rags. And many discouraging thoughts were put into my mind; as,

'Many are called, but few chosen'; 'Hath not the potter power over his own clay, to make one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour?' From which it was suggested to me that I was made to dishonour, and so must inevitably perish.

On September 3, 1758, being overwhelmed with guilt and fear, as I was reading it was as if one whispered to me, 'Thou hadst better read no more; for the more thou readest, the more thou wilt know. "And he that knoweth his Lord's will, and doeth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes."' I paused a little, and then resolved, 'Let the consequence be what it may, I will proceed.' When I came to those words, 'The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God,' as I fixed my eyes upon them, in a moment my darkness was removed, and the Spirit did bear witness with my spirit that I was a child of God. In the same instant I was filled with unspeakable peace and joy in believing, and all fear of death, judgement, and hell suddenly vanished away. Before this, I was kept awake by anguish and fear, so that I could not get an hour's sound sleep in a night. Now I wanted not sleep, being abundantly refreshed by contemplating the rich display of God's mercy in adopting so unworthy a creature as I was to be an heir of the kingdom of heaven.

This joy and peace continued about three weeks; after which it was suggested to me, 'Hast not thou deceived thyself? Is it not presumption to think thou art a child of God? But if thou art, thou wilt soon fall away; thou wilt not endure to the end.' This threw me into great

heaviness, but it did not continue long. For as I gave myself unto prayer, and to reading and hearing the Word of God at all opportunities, my evidence became clearer and clearer, my faith and love stronger and stronger. And I found the accomplishment of that promise, 'They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.'

Yet I soon found that though I was justified freely, yet I was not wholly sanctified. This brought me into a deep concern, and confirmed my resolution to admit of no peace, no, nor truce, with the evils which I still found in my heart. I was sensible both that they hindered me at present in all my holy exercises, and that I could not enter into the joy of my Lord unless they were all rooted out. These considerations led me to consider more attentively the exceeding great and precious promises whereby we may escape all the corruption that is in the world, and be made partakers of the divine nature. I was much confirmed in my hope of their accomplishment by frequently hearing Mr. Mather speak upon the subject. I saw it was the mere gift of God, and, consequently, to be received by faith. And after many sharp and painful conflicts and many gracious visitations, on March 28, 1761, my spirit was drawn out and engaged in wrestling with God for about two hours in a manner I never did before. Suddenly I was stripped of all but love. I was all love, and prayer, and praise; and in this happy state, rejoicing evermore, and in everything giving thanks, I continued for some years, wanting nothing for soul or body more than I received from day to day.

I began to look round, and to observe more than ever the whole world full of sin and misery. I felt a strong desire for others to partake of the same happiness with myself. I longed to declare unto them what I knew of our Saviour. But I first sat down to count the cost; and being then fully convinced of my duty, I began to exhort those of the neighbouring towns to 'repent and believe the gospel.' This I did for about a year and a half, but was still convinced I might be more useful as a travelling preacher. This I mentioned to Mr. Pawson a little before the Conference in 1769. A little after it he wrote and let me know that he had proposed me at the Conference, and that I was accepted as a probationer, and stationed in the Oxfordshire Circuit. Having settled my temporal affairs with all the expedition I could, I went into the circuit, and was received far better than I expected; and I found that affection for the people which never since wore off. After spending some time very agreeably there, I believe to our mutual satisfaction, I removed to Bedford Circuit, where I remained till the Conference in 1774.

I was then appointed for Enniskillen Circuit, in the north of Ireland. This was a trial to me on several accounts. I was an utter stranger to Ireland, of which I had heard little good spoken: I had a great aversion to sea-voyages. And what troubled me more than all was that my mother was on her dying-bed. But she knew and loved the work I was engaged in; so she willingly gave me up to the Lord, though she did not expect to see me any more till we met in eternity. In this

circuit I found many things that were not pleasing to flesh and blood. It took us eight weeks to go through it; and in this time we slept in nearly fifty different places—some of them cold enough, some damp enough, and others not very clean.

We commonly preached two or three times a day, besides meeting the societies and visiting the sick, and very frequently we had no other food than potatoes and a little salt meat. By this means, as my constitution was but weak, my strength was nearly exhausted. But it was an ample amends to see that the work of the Lord prospered in our hands. Upwards of two hundred members were this year added to the society, a great part of whom had found redemption through the blood of the covenant. And I was entirely willing to wear out my body in so blessed a work.

But I was soon cut short; for before I got into the next circuit where I was stationed, namely, that of Armagh, my labour was at an end—my body quite sunk under me. I was taken with an entire loss of appetite, a violent bleeding at the nose, and profuse night-sweats, so that my flesh was consumed from my bones and my eyes sunk in my head. My sight also failed me, so that I could not distinguish my most intimate acquaintance the breadth of a room. But although my life was quite despaired of, yet it pleased God to raise me up; and after a confinement of twelve weeks at Sydare, I removed into Armagh Circuit. But going out before I had sufficiently recovered my strength, the cold seized upon me, and caused

such a humour to settle in my legs that for some time I could not set my feet to the ground. But my mind being set upon my work, I little regarded the pain of my body, so long as I was able to sit on my horse, or stand and speak to the people. So in about a fortnight I went into my circuit again; but in a fortnight more I was again disabled, the humour returning so violently that I was laid up for eight weeks. But these afflictions were not grievous—they were all sweetened by the peace of God which I enjoyed and the exceeding kindness of my friends where I was. Lord, remember them for good!

By my respite from preaching, while I travelled to Dublin, and afterwards to London, and by the frequent use of bathing, both in salt and in fresh water, I gradually recovered my health. And I have great reason to bless God, who has preserved me during the eleven years that I have been an itinerant preacher. In this time He has delivered me from many troubles, both of body and mind. He has enabled me to persevere in my labour, with a single eye. He has kept my heart disengaged from all creature-loves, and all desire of worldly happiness. And I can still truly say:

> Blessed with the scorn of finite good,
> My soul is lightened of her load,
> And seeks the things above.

With the same work, and in the same spirit, may I fill up the remnant of my days! Then may I join the choirs around the throne, and give blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanks-

giving, and honour, and power, and might unto God and the Lamb for ever and ever!

On September 1, 1784, Wesley appointed Dr. Coke Superintendent for America with Asbury, and Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey to act as elders, 'by baptizing and administering the Lord's Supper, to go and serve the desolate sheep in America.' In 1800 Whatcoat was appointed Bishop, as Asbury's strength was overtaxed by the growth of Methodism in the United States. He had a great harvest of souls in America.

Dr. Abel Stevens says: 'Richard Whatcoat was one of the saintliest men in the primitive itinerancy of Methodism. Had he been a Papist, he would have been canonized. His biographer adds that it might be said of him, as of St. Basil, 'that so much divine majesty and lustre appeared in him it made the wicked tremble to behold him. In him were seen majesty and love. His whole deportment was beautiful, and adorned with personal grace.

'His manners were devoutly grave, but relieved by affectionate cordiality, and he was both revered and loved by the people. His preaching was often attended with overwhelming unction, and in the administration of the Sacraments he was peculiarly impressive, rendering these solemnities frequently occasions of great effect.' [1]

His Obituary in the American *Minutes* for 1807 says: 'In the year 1784 he was sent to the United States of America, and occupied various impor-

[1] *History of American Methodism*, pp. 163, 189, 461.

tant stations in the cities, towns, circuits, and districts, with the fidelity of an apostolic man of God. Upwards of six years, in the latter part of his life, he was a Superintendent in the Methodist Episcopal Church till he was past the seventieth year of his age. We will not use many words to describe this almost inimitable man. Who ever saw him light or trifling? Who ever heard him speak evil of any person? Nay, who ever heard him speak an idle word? He was dead to envy, self-exaltation, and praise; sober without sadness; cheerful without levity; careful without covetousness; and decent without pride. He died not possessed of property sufficient to have paid the expenses of his sickness and funeral, if a charge had been made—so dead was he to the world! Although he was not a man of much erudition, yet he was well read in the Word of God. His knowledge of the Scriptures was so great that one of his friends used to call him his "Concordance." He gave himself greatly to reading; and, notwithstanding that he was called to the office of an overseer of the church at an advanced period of life, he magnified his office by travelling annually three or four thousand miles, through all the United States. A complication of painful and irresistible diseases, produced and aggravated by excessive travelling, closed the scene. He was a prodigy of pain and patience for thirteen weeks. He departed this life in the full assurance of faith, July 5, 1806, in the house of Richard Basset, Esq., in Dover, State of Delaware.'

Nearly a year after his death Asbury reached

Dover, Delaware, and over his tomb declared that he 'knew Richard Whatcoat, from his own age of fourteen to sixty-two years, most intimately —his holy manner of life, in duty at all times, in all places, and before all people, as a Christian and as a minister; his long-suffering as a man of great affliction of body and mind, having been exercised with severe diseases and great labours; his charity; his love of God and man, in all its effects, tempers, words, and actions, bearing with resignation and patience great temptations, bodily labours, and inexpressible pain. In life and death he was placid and calm. As he lived, so he died.'

GEORGE STORY[1]

I WAS born in the year 1738, at Harthill, in the West Riding of Yorkshire. At four years of age I had learned the Catechism, and had repeated it before the minister in the church.

About that time I had a narrow escape: being near the edge of a deep pond, my foot slipped and I plunged in; but recovering myself, I struggled to the side, and, laying hold on some weeds, got out, no one being near that could give me any assistance.

In my sixth year I had read the Bible through several times, and other books that came in my way—particularly the *History of the Sufferings of the Protestants in the Valleys of Piedmont*, which fixed in me an aversion to the principles of the Church of Rome. Among the practical treatises in this History was a caveat against dancing, wherein was asserted that 'every step a dancer takes is a step to hell.' This so affected me that no inducement could ever prevail upon me to attend the dancing-school—which I esteem a singular mercy, as it prevented connexions that might have proved very pernicious.

One day I wantonly threw a stone, and killed a young bird belonging to a neighbour. Though

[1] *The Arminian Magazine*, 1782, p. 14.

no one saw me, yet for several nights I had little sleep. The idea of the bird's expiring in agonies through my wickedness filled me with inexpressible anguish. I would have given a great deal to have restored the little creature to life. Tears and prayers to God for pardon, and promises to offend Him thus no more, was the only way wherein I found relief.

My parents taught me early the fear of the Lord, as far as they knew; and though their instructions were tedious and irksome, yet they made an impression on my mind that was never lost, but often recurred when I was alone or in places of temptation.

Our minister was a pious, venerable man, and performed his duty with a solemnity that often struck me with awe of the divine presence; particularly when he was reading the burial service, I frequently had a distant prospect of judgement and eternity. I was agreeably affected with thunder and lightning. It filled me with a sense of God's majesty and power; for which reason I would get into the midst of it, though ever so dreadful, if I was not prevented, that I might enjoy the whole report and see the full blaze.

In my seventh year I lost all relish for learning, and contracted several evil habits. The two following years my time at school was spent to little purpose: part of this I attribute to the being too early taught to read, and too close application to it; and part to the want of a proper master who could suit my genius and engage my curiosity for useful knowledge. But my master dying, and being succeeded by one

whose ability and method were adapted to my capacity, I soon recovered my thirst for learning, and made considerable improvement therein.

Before I was well able to carry a gun I was fond of shooting; till being out one day in the fields, my gun went off at half-cock, and was within a very little of killing my brother. This filled me with such horror that I could not endure that exercise any more.

When I was about ten years of age God began to revive His work of grace in and about Sheffield, the rumour of which spread into our village, and occasioned serious reflections in the minds of many. One evening, as I was hearkening to the conversation of my parents on that subject, I was struck with an observation they made, that prayer was nothing unless the mind was stayed on God. At night when I repeated my customary prayers I watched my thoughts narrowly and soon found that they wandered from the Lord all the time. This discovery deeply affected me: I strove with all my might to think on God as being present, seeing and hearing me; and after repeated efforts, through grace I prevailed. I now began to delight in duties; to pray fervently and feelingly, with or without a form; and many times the Lord answered me in such a manner as clearly convinced me of His omniscience and omnipresence. I read the Bible with pleasure and profit: the sufferings of Christ filled me with wonder and gratitude, as I now understood that He endured them all for my sins, and to save my soul from eternal destruction. Reading in the Thirty-nine Articles that justification was

by faith, I endeavoured to cast my soul upon the Lord in the best manner I was able, and at times was persuaded that He had forgiven all my trespasses. Though I had never heard any of the Methodist preachers, yet from that time I felt an esteem for them; and notwithstanding they were loaded with all manner of reproach, and represented in the most detestable light, those calumnies only increased my regard for them, because I understood that true Christians, in all former ages, had met with the same treatment from the world.

Having acquired all the learning that was taught at a country school, my friends began to think of putting me to some business. Going one day to a bookseller's shop, in a neighbouring market-town, I got acquainted with him; and my friends accepting of his proposals, I soon after went with him to his place of residence. This introduced me into company, and exposed me to temptations I never knew before. And yet the Spirit of God strove with me more than ever. Almost every night I was called to a strict account by that inward monitor, and reproved for the faults of the day; and I could seldom sleep till with prayers and tears I had implored mercy and in some degree obtained it from the Lord. And in this manner I went on for about a year.

I had often been perplexed with the doctrine of predestination, but now the tempter drew me insensibly into it. He continually suggested that if I was to be saved, I certainly should, live as I list; but if I was ordained to be damned, there was no remedy—God Himself could not

save me, and therefore it was mere folly to give myself so much concern about it. But although these suggestions tended to stupefy my conscience and harden my heart, yet I was more uneasy than ever. The Methodists at that time were few and feeble; they had seldom any travelling preachers. I sometimes attended their prayer-meetings, and often followed them up and down the town, hoping they would turn and speak to me; but none took any notice of me. I was left alone to struggle with sin and Satan.

One day, hearing a preacher was to be there, I attended; but he did not come. Upon this, one of the local preachers, who was then a Calvinist, gave an exhortation, in which he fairly repeated the words that Satan had so often suggested to me; namely, that if we were to be saved, we could not possibly perish; and if we were to be damned, there was no help for us. This made a deep impression, and confirmed all that the devil had been preaching to me for years. I believed the horrible doctrine, and from that time determined to give myself as little trouble as possible about religion.

Being surrounded with books, I read the first that came to hand—histories, novels, plays, and romances, by dozens; but they only pleased while my eyes were upon them, and afterwards furnished matter for a thousand vain imaginations. I then read *The Lives of the Heathen Philosophers* with admiration, and determined to copy after them. I perfected myself in geometry and trigonometry; then I learned Macauley's shorthand; soon after, geography and astronomy,

together with botany, anatomy, physic, and several branches of natural philosophy. Once I intended studying the law, and read a great deal in *The Statutes at Large*, and other law books: but the subject was too dry and unentertaining for one of my desultory disposition. I could recollect reading over three hundred volumes, of one kind or another (some of them were large folios) before I was sixteen years old. My passion for books was insatiable. I frequently read till ten or eleven o'clock at night, and began again at four or five o'clock in the morning; nor had I patience to eat my meat unless I had a book before me.

But about this time I was weary of the shop, and entered the printing-office. This opened a new scene of things, which pleased me for a season. I was determined to be a complete master of my business, and in about two years was able to accomplish my day's work in six hours, so that I had much time upon my hands for study and recreations. One summer I was an angler, attended the rivers early every morning; but this, after a few months' trial, brought me neither pleasure nor profit. The next summer I commenced florist, took a garden, was passionately fond of auriculas, polyanthuses, &c. But this, too, soon grew insipid—happiness was not to be found in these pursuits. In the midst of my reading I met with some deistical authors: I read and reasoned, till the Bible grew not only dull, but, I thought, full of contradictions. I staggered first at the divinity of Christ; and at length gave up the Bible altogether, and sunk into fatalism and deism.

This new light promised great satisfaction. I thought myself much wiser than others; but, alas, it soon led into a dreary labyrinth! My ideas of God and religion were quite confounded. I felt the wretchedness of my heart, but could discover no way to escape from it.

About the age of eighteen the management of the printing-office fell to my share. I had a weekly newspaper to publish, all the paragraphs to select from the public prints, the advertisements to prepare, the press to correct, and the journeymen and the apprentices to superintend. This flattered my vanity, increased my native pride, and consequently led me farther from God. I then sought happiness in card-playing; but, after repeated trials, it appeared such a silly waste of time, and so opposite to common sense, that I was obliged to give it up. Twice or thrice I got into bad company, and was intoxicated with liquor; but in the midst of this folly I saw its madness, and turned from it with abhorrence. I likewise saw its ruinous consequences in those I was daily surrounded with. However, I hoped a horse-race was a more manly and rational amusement: I therefore attended the races at Doncaster, with the most flattering expectation of the happiness I should find that week. The first day vanished without any satisfaction; the second was still worse. As I passed through the company dejected and disappointed, it occurred to my mind, 'What is all this immense multitude assembled here for? To see a few horses gallop two or three times round the course, as if the devil was in both them and their riders! Cer-

tainly we are all mad; we are fit for Bedlam if we imagine that the Almighty made us for no other purpose but to seek happiness in such senseless amusements!' I was ashamed and confounded, and determined never to be seen there any more.

When I was twenty years old I was glad of the opportunity of seeing London. I went up full of the most sanguine expectation of finding the happiness I was in search of, and therefore lost no time in seeing and hearing everything new and curious that I could gain access to. But new things quickly grew old, and the repeated sight of them soon proved disgustful. No happiness followed, but an unaccountable anguish of spirit whenever I attended to the sensations of my own mind. Then I would gladly have travelled into any part of Europe or America, hoping a continual change of scenes would satisfy me. But it was war-time, and I could not embark for Holland without a passport from the Secretary of State, which I did not know how to procure.

At length I resolved to try if religion would afford me any relief. I went to several places of worship; but even this was in vain: there was something dull and disagreeable wherever I turned my eyes, and I knew not that the malady was in myself. At length I found Mr. Whitefield's chapel in Tottenham Court Road, and was agreeably entertained with his manner of preaching: his discourses were so engaging that when I retired to my lodgings I wrote down the substance of them in my journal, and frequently read them over with pleasure; but still nothing reached

my case, nor had I any light into the state of my soul. Meantime, on the week-nights I went to the theatres—nor could I discern any difference between Mr. Whitefield's preaching and seeing a good tragedy.

Being now weary of everything, and every place being equal to me (for I carried about with me a mind that was never at rest), I embraced the invitation of my friends, and returned into the country. I was kindly received, and solicited to enter into business for myself. But, reflecting that I was young and unexperienced, I declined the offer, and engaged with a person to manage his printing-office. I was now in an agreeable situation. I wanted for nothing. I had more money than I knew what to do with. Yet, notwithstanding, I was as wretched as I could live, without knowing either the cause of this misery, or any way to escape.

I had now for some years attempted to regulate my conduct according to reason; but, alas! I stood condemned, in a thousand instances, even at the bar of that partial judge. From my infancy I was exceedingly passionate; and this evil grew upon me, and caused bitter reflections on various occasions. I knew that anger was a paroxysm of madness—that it was contrary to reason in every respect: I therefore guarded against it with all my might. Sometimes I conquered, and those transient victories greatly pleased me. But if an unexpected temptation suddenly occurred, all my resolutions were but as a thread of flax before the fire, and my behaviour was more like that of an enraged wild

beast than of a rational creature. Sometimes, when among facetious company, I endeavoured to catch their spirit, but in the midst of levity I had a dread upon me. Experience taught me that their laughter was madness. As soon as I returned to sober thoughts I found my feigned mirth left a melancholy upon my mind, and this was succeeded either by storms of passion or an aversion even to life. During this dark night of apostasy I lost all remembrance of God's former goodness. I wandered to different places of religious worship, but found sufficient matter everywhere to be disgusted. At length I forsook them all, and on Sundays confined myself to my room, or retired to the centre of a neighbouring wood. Here I considered, with the closest attention I was able, the arguments for and against Deism. I would gladly have given credit to the Christian revelation, but could not. My reason leaned to the wrong side, and involved me in endless perplexities. I likewise endeavoured to fortify myself with stronger arguments and firmer resolutions against my evil tempers; for since I could not be a Christian, I wished, however, to be a good moral heathen. Internal anguish frequently compelled me to supplicate the Divine Being for mercy and truth. I seldom gave over till my heart was melted and I felt something of God's presence. But I retained those gracious impressions only for a short time.

Being employed in abridging and printing the Life of Eugene Aram, who was hung in chains at Knaresborough for murder, I observed that by intense application he attained to a prodigious

knowledge in the sciences and languages. I was so engaged with this account that I determined on the same acquisitions—vainly imagining that as I had the desire, so I had the capacity to learn everything. While I was musing upon these matters, and fixing the plan for my future proceedings, the following thoughts fastened upon my mind, and broke in pieces all my schemes: 'The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. What did this man's wisdom profit him? It did not save him from being a thief and a murderer—no, nor from attempting even his own life. True wisdom is foolishness with men. He that will be wise must first become a fool, that he may be wise!' I was like a man awakened out of sleep. I was astonished. I felt myself wrong. I was conscious I had been pursuing a vain shadow, and that God only could direct me into the right path. I therefore applied to Him with earnest importunity, entreating Him to show me the true way to happiness, which I was determined to follow, however difficult or dangerous.

Just at this time a work of grace broke out in the village where I was born, through the labours of a person remarkably zealous for the cause of God. My mother in particular was deeply convinced of the truth, which she soon experienced, and retained the life and power thereof to her dying day. She was much concerned for me; hoping, if I could be brought among religious persons, I should likewise soon be convinced. She therefore, by an acquaintance, entreated me to converse with the Methodists. I answered,

'If my mother desires it, I will visit them with all my heart.' The first time I entered a Methodist's house they went to prayer with me and for me a considerable time. I looked upon them as well-meaning, ignorant people, and thought no more about the matter. In a few days they desired I would come and see them again. Considering it was my mother's request, I went without hesitation. I found four or five persons in the house, with whom I disputed about religion for some hours, till I had fairly wearied them. They laboured to convince me that I was a sinner and in danger of eternal death if I did not repent and return to God. These were subjects I had no kind of idea of; and as their arguments were only supported by Scripture, for which I had very little regard, all they said made not the least impression.

As I was about to withdraw, not a little elevated with my imaginary victory, one of the company desired to ask me a few questions. The first was, 'Are you happy?' My countenance instantly fell, and I answered from the dictates of my conscience, 'No.' She then inquired if I was not desirous of finding happiness. I replied it had been my pursuit ever since I could remember, that I was willing to obtain it on any terms, and that I had sought for it every way I could think of, but in vain. She then showed me the true way of obtaining the happiness I wanted, assuring me if I sought the Lord with all my heart I should certainly find in Him that peace and pleasure which the world could not bestow. Every word sunk deep into my mind; and from

that moment I never lost my convictions, nor my resolution to be truly devoted to God.

I immediately broke off all connexion with my companions, threw my useless books into the fire, and sought the Lord with all my might. I soon discovered the importance of the Scriptures—that there was no other revelation of the divine will to mankind, that I must credit the truths contained therein, however opposite they appeared to my own vitiated reason. I found my reason had been deceived and corrupted by the suggestions of an enemy, and that I could trust it no more till it was renewed by grace; that my memory was filled with a train of false ideas every moment presenting themselves, and leading me from God; and that my understanding was totally dark till divine illumination should visit me.

Reading Mr. Hervey's *Dialogues*, this light shone upon me, and I was much delighted with the discovery of the divinity of Christ and the atonement which He made for sinners. About this time I heard Mr. Fugill preach: his discourse was suited to one in my state, and the power of my evil reasonings was suspended while he described the work of grace in the soul. I saw the way of justification and full sanctification so clearly that I could trace the path as if it had been a road delineated in a map.

The next discovery I had was the hardness of my heart. This called off my attention from everything else—neither fears nor joys, heaven nor hell, made any impression on it. I often thought that Satan himself could not possibly

have a more obdurate heart. I found it was full of pride, ambition, anger, evil desire, unbelief, and everything that was vile and vain. Being invited to join the society, I gladly embraced the opportunity, and found much encouragement to seek the Lord, notwithstanding all the wretchedness I felt in myself.

Attending to the experience of the people, I observed that almost all of them, during the time of conviction, were exercised with horrible fears and terrors; and thence I concluded it was necessary I should have the same. For at that time I did not know that frequently those distracting terrors were from the enemy, in order to drive the soul into despair. I therefore used every method to bring myself under dreadful apprehensions, hoping this would break my stubborn heart; but I could never find that kind of experience. After several weeks' struggling with this obduracy, at last I resigned myself to the Lord, when He was pleased to regard my distress; and while William Brammah [1] was at prayer the softening power of grace descended, and removed the stony heart.

I now found a great change in my mind, but it was not complete; for I had no consciousness of the pardon of sin, which I was convinced was the privilege of the children of God—therefore I could not conclude myself justified. However, I began to seek for that blessing with all diligence.

[1] See Wesley's *Journal*, June 6, 1777: 'I preached at Bradford, where a blessed work has increased ever since William Brammah was here. "Hath not God chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise"?' Brammah 'finished his course with joy' in 1780.

Many difficulties occurred in the way. The old train of pernicious ideas continually presented themselves: I could not meditate a moment without sinking into Deism; and I was equally embarrassed with the doctrine of predestination. Indeed, their connexion seemed inseparable: I could not by any means disjoin one from the other. And I repeatedly found that the moment I suffered my mind to embrace either of them I lost sight of God, and plunged into blackness of darkness. The wretchedness I then felt was insupportable, accompanied with suggestions to blaspheme, or to embrace atheism. After many sore conflicts the Lord showed me a path by which I might escape; and that was by staying my mind upon Him, and ceasing from these reasonings. This I found was a safe, though painful, path; it equally mortified my proud reason and vain imaginations, while gracious promises occurred, and encouraged me to follow on to know the Lord. Now I began to look up for the pardon of sin; I saw that it was purchased by Christ, and that God gave it freely—that no works or sufferings of mine could in the least degree merit this blessing, but that it was to be received by faith.

But here again I was greatly embarrassed. The Scriptures universally testified that I must believe or perish; my friends were continually urging me to believe and I should be saved. Upon close examination I found that I did believe every truth in the Bible; yet this did not bring a sense of justification. And I durst not think that God was reconciled to me, when I was conscious of

the contrary. But the Lord soon brought me out of this dilemma, by showing me that to forgive was His prerogative, and to believe was my duty. This believing for salvation I found was a distinct thing from believing I was saved: I found it implied the lifting up of my heart to the Lord in fervent prayer, looking to Him with a single eye and steady aim, without evil reasonings or vain wanderings; cleaving to Him with all my strength, casting my soul upon His mercy, and depending upon His promises.

While I persisted in this I found I was saved from many evils, and the great blessing I had in view was often near; sometimes I could lay hold on it for a moment, and found peace and joy; but I had been so long habituated to unbelief that it often rose spontaneously, and overturned all my consolation. I had therefore to renew my efforts hourly, and to rise as speedily as possible from every fall. In this exercise I continued about two months. Many times I lost my way by too scrupulously regarding the experience of others; yet I had never found anything like despair, unless I wilfully reasoned myself into it; nor could I attain to any deep terrors, which were too much insisted on as a necessary branch of conviction. I likewise formed wrong ideas of justification: I wanted some great work to be wrought upon me, that I might have something very remarkable to boast of. And therefore, when the Lord gently drew near and manifested His peace in a small degree, I rejected it with displeasure. I even contended with the Lord, till He strongly impressed upon my mind these

words: 'I will bring the blind by a way that they know not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight: these things will I do unto them, and not forsake them.' I was now convinced of the necessity of receiving with thankfulness the smallest tokens of the divine favour; and that I must suffer, with child-like simplicity, the Lord to lead me in His own way. This was soon followed by a clear manifestation of pardoning mercy, that excluded all doubts, temptations, and fears, accompanied with a joy unspeakable and full of glory.

I continued praising a reconciled God for some days. The happiness I felt carried me above every difficulty. I could discern and reject the first approach of temptation. I now thought my mountain was so strong I should never be moved. I did not know that I should meet with war any more. Indeed, I expected to go right forward to heaven in a short time. My mind had been so intensely engaged in seeking pardon that I had quite forgot there was a further work of grace to be wrought in me. But the Lord did not suffer me to remain long under that mistake: He soon discovered the remains of the carnal mind, and the necessity of its removal. I had scarcely begun earnestly seeking after that blessing before the tempter returned with double rage. I saw an invaluable privilege before me, but the way was difficult; a thousand arguments were presented to discourage my pursuit.

Once I lost the peace of God by attending to a discourse which set justification exceedingly

high, confounding it with full sanctification. Viewing myself in this false glass, and not finding I had all the marks which the preacher said belonged to one born of God, I fell into the snare of Satan, gave up my shield, and suffered myself to be persuaded that all I had experienced of the goodness of God was a mere delusion. For some hours I was in as deep distress as I had ever known; and I saw no way to escape but by returning to the Lord in faith, who then discovered and broke the snare.

I had suffered much by evil reasonings on many occasions, but now I was determined to use double vigilance against them. Yet the enemy suggested to me, 'Thou mayest now take thy time: thou art a child of God; and if once in Christ, always in Christ. As for full sanctification, it will be accomplished some time or other—perhaps in the article of death. God has begun the work, and He will finish it; therefore take thy ease, and enjoy thy present comfort.' But I saw, whether these were true or false arguments, yet the conclusion was deadly. Therefore I rejected the suggestions with all my might, and determined to be wholly devoted to God.

In the midst of great exercises of mind, through manifold temptations, I omitted no opportunity of exhorting all about me to flee from the wrath to come. God was pleased to smile upon my weak endeavours, and to make me instrumental in the conversion of several. Afterwards I was convinced I ought to act in a more public manner; but I saw the danger of being too forward as well as of being too backward, and was enabled to

keep from both extremes. When an opportunity offered of giving an exhortation in any of the neighbouring societies, I did it with much fear and trembling; but I durst not shun the cross. Indeed, I laboured under great disadvantages. Through a natural impediment in my speech, I could not easily pronounce several words; and it was a considerable time before I could conquer, or substitute others in their place. I hoped my acquaintance with authors on most subjects might be of some use to me; but I was greatly mistaken: my mind was in a situation that forbade all kind of meditation. If I attempted any such thing, I was instantly filled with my old deistical ideas again. I was therefore necessitated to stay my thoughts upon the Lord, and to follow His light and truth as they shone upon me. What knowledge I had acquired while in the spirit of apostasy from God I was obliged to throw away as altogether useless.

After some time a scene opened which was both painful and profitable. We took an old chapel in a neighbouring village, the inhabitants of which, in general, differed very little from the savage Indians. Here I frequently preached to large congregations, and met with plenty of persecution for my pains; but it was not unexpected, and I was determined to stand it, though it should cost me my life.

One time a Popish gentleman hired some men to pull me out of the pulpit. Though I was ignorant of their design, I providentially fixed my eye on them as soon as they came in. They were confounded, and stayed peaceably till the

service was over. Sometimes the mob revenged themselves on the door and windows, throwing whatever came next to hand, and then followed us through the streets with mire and dirt. At an adjoining village, where I was to preach, some had engaged a madman, and to qualify him more perfectly for the work, had made him drunk. He came armed with a large club, and raging in a most furious manner. I was waiting calmly for the event, when the man's wife came, and, having endeavoured in vain to persuade him to go away, fell into violent fits. Seeing this, he instantly became as quiet as a lamb, and we returned without the least injury.

Soon after I entered into the most afflicting dispensation I had ever known, which continued three months. I gradually sunk into unaccountable anguish of mind, as if the powers of darkness surrounded me without intermission. Sometimes such a horror penetrated my whole soul as if I had committed some atrocious crime, and was instantly to stand before the great Judge to receive the sentence of eternal damnation. Very often I expected instant death ; my whole frame seemed just dissolving. In the midst of all I found the grace of God was sufficient to support me under it ; my conscience was free from condemnation, and I saw this distress was partly natural and partly diabolical. I still kept cleaving to the Lord, and staying my mind upon Him : the cloud broke, and my former peace returned. I found something daily dying within me, but what it was I could not tell. When I was at the lowest I began to rise again, and

continued increasing in the life of God for three months more. I was then one evening meeting my band, when the power of the Lord descended in an uncommon manner, and I believed He had purified my heart. At first I rejected it through a sense of my unworthiness, but the witness again returned. I considered, 'What have I either done or suffered that could induce the Lord to show me this great mercy?' And I was upon the point of giving up again when it occurred to my mind, 'By grace ye are saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast.' I was then constrained to acquiesce, and said, 'Since it is so, I will hold fast if I can.'

The next morning I awoke in such power and peace as I had never known, and the promises in the latter part of the thirtieth chapter of Ezekiel were applied in such a manner as left no doubt but the Lord had wrought that great change in me. Nevertheless it was not in the manner I expected. I supposed a soul saved from all sin would be a great, wise, and glorious creature; whereas I found myself infinitely little, and mean, and base: I had such a discovery of my own nothingness as humbled me to the dust continually. I felt myself as ignorant and helpless as an infant, and knew I could not stand a moment without the divine aid. Nor did I find such overflowing joys as I expected, but only an even permanent peace, which kept my heart in the knowledge and love of God.

Meantime several scriptures were opened to

me at once, and I found a delightful relish for the whole. But still I found knowledge in divine things was to be acquired gradually, through patient labour—and that even this was limited, God giving no more than was necessary, and at such times as He pleased.

I walked in this liberty some months, till one day I met with a circumstance which grieved me. I attended too much to the temptation, and was not inwardly watchful; so, before I was aware, the temptation took place in my heart, and I found myself angry for a moment or two. As I never expected to feel this evil any more, my distress was inconceivable for three or four hours—the enemy suggesting that I was now an apostate from the pure love of God, and could never be restored. I cried mightily to the Lord, and He discovered the device of the enemy, and healed the wound that had been made. He likewise showed me that as I had received Christ Jesus, so I must walk in Him—that the same faith by which I entered into rest must be continued, in order to be established in that liberty.

The Conference being at Leeds, in the year 1762, I attended with a design of being edified by the public discourses and private conversation of the preachers. And herein I had abundant reason to be satisfied. Mr. Wesley's sermons were in a peculiar manner calculated for establishing me in what I had lately experienced. During the Conference it appeared there wanted several more preachers as itinerants in different circuits. My friends proposed me for one, and

asked if I had any objection. As I was resigned to any station Providence seemed to point out, I submitted to the judgement of my brethren. Being admitted on trial, I returned home to settle my affairs; and in the latter end of February, 1763, I went into the Dales Circuit.

When I got to Darlington the town was in an uproar, occasioned by George Bell's prophecy. That day, according to his prediction, the world was to be destroyed.[1] Many people were much frightened; but their fears soon gave place to resentment, and they threatened to pull down the house and burn the first preacher that came. However, considering that God was all-sufficient, I told Mrs. Oswald if she would venture the house I would venture myself. Notice being given for preaching, the place was soon filled with people, rude enough. Providentially I found in the Newcastle paper a paragraph wherein Mr. Wesley disavowed all connexion with Mr. Bell and all credit to his prophecy.[2] This I read to the people, which instantly quieted them, and they attended patiently to the end of the meeting. A poor backslider was that night cut to the heart, and roared out in a tremendous manner. But shortly after he found mercy, and died in peace.

In this circuit I found several societies of sincere people; but many of them were settled upon their lees—those who had obtained justification were resting in their past experience,

[1] On February 28, 1763. Bell was a corporal in the Life Guards.

[2] See Wesley's *Journal*, April 28, 1763.

and had little expectation of being saved from inward sin till death. I spoke strongly of full salvation, and God gave the word success. Several were stirred up to seek for purity of heart, and others were convinced of sin. Mr. Samuel Meggot,[1] a zealous, pious preacher, was my fellow labourer, in whom I found the affection of a parent. Meeting me one day in the Dales, he said, 'You must make haste to Barnard Castle: the people are all in confusion; six or seven of them have found full sanctification, and the rest are tearing one another to pieces about it.' When I got to the town I found many were not a little prejudiced against me, as a setter forth of strange doctrines. I attempted to preach among them, but could find no liberty; I met the society, but it was still the same. I was just going to conclude, when in an instant the power of God descended in a wonderful manner. The assembly were all in tears, some praising God for pardoning mercy, and others for purifying grace. And even those who could not yet understand this new doctrine were constrained to say, 'If we do not believe it, we will never speak against it any more.' The snare of the enemy was effectually broken; and from that time the work spread, not only through the town, but also into the neighbouring societies. We seldom had any meeting, public or private, but some were either convinced, justified, or saved from all sin.

The society in Weardale consisted of thirty-six members. But one Sunday, at two o'clock, the

[1] See p. 189.

divine power descended upon the assembly; six persons, one after another, dropped down, and, as soon as they came to themselves, cried out for mercy. The work from that time revived, and spread through different parts of the Dale; and the society was soon doubled in its number, many of whom stand to this day.

In other places the people were remarkably lively, and many were added to the societies. I continued in this circuit till July, 1764, having the satisfactory evidence that I was acting in a station suitable to the designs of Providence. This greatly supported me in the various difficulties that unavoidably occurred. Indeed, I exerted myself much above my strength both in preaching and travelling, often venturing in tempestuous weather over those dreary fells when even the mountaineers themselves durst not. I was frequently in danger of being swallowed up in the bogs, or carried away by the torrents. Sometimes I have rode over valleys where the snow was eight or ten feet deep for two or three furlongs together. When the danger was most imminent, I not only found a calm resignation, but a solid rejoicing in the God of my salvation.

Mr. Story died on May 22, 1818, in the eightieth year of his age.

His obituary, written by his friend Mr. Benson, appears in the *Minutes* of 1818:

He was an old disciple, and faithful labourer in the Lord's vineyard. His piety was genuine, and

uniformly evidenced by a life and conversation unblameable and holy. His views of Christianity, in all its branches, were clear and correct, and his attachment to every part of Methodism steady and uninterrupted. He believed and loved our doctrines, which he considered as being those of the Scriptures; and perfectly approved of our discipline, and took all opportunities of enforcing it. He was received as an itinerant preacher in the year 1762, continued to travel in various parts of England, Scotland, and Ireland for twenty-nine years, and had many proofs that his labours were attended with success. In the year 1792 he was appointed editor of our Magazine and other publications; and a few years after, superintendent of our printing-office—the duties of which departments he discharged to the satisfaction of the Conference, and to his own credit, until his various infirmities rendered it necessary that he should be released from them. The weakness attendant on age came very gradually upon him until within a few months of his death, when his strength of body and the faculties of his mind decayed apace. His end was peaceful and serene, as his life had been meek, gentle, and temperate. A short time before his death, to a friend who asked him concerning his prospect into eternity, he said, 'I feel Christ to be more precious to my soul than ever.'

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